

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, December 1, 1998 1:30 p.m.**

Date: 98/12/01

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

O God, grant that we the members of our province's Legislature may fulfill our office with honesty and integrity.

May our first concern be for the good of all our people.

Guide our deliberations this day.

Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Legislature His Worship Mayor Bill Smith of Edmonton; Mr. Fred Knoedler, president and chief executive officer of Fletcher's Fine Foods; and Mr. George Paleologou, vice-president and chief financial officer of Fletcher's Fine Foods. These gentlemen join us today to announce that Fletcher's will be opening a pork processing facility in the city of Edmonton at the former Gainers' site. Alberta Public Works, Supply and Services, acting on behalf of the government, has facilitated the sale of approximately 27 acres of this site to Fletcher's. The remainder of the site will be turned over to the city of Edmonton, as previously committed by this government. Fletcher's will begin processing bacon late in the new year, bringing a significant number of jobs to Edmonton over the next few years. The Alberta government is very pleased that Fletcher's has chosen the city of Edmonton for its new facility.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that Mayor Smith, Mr. Knoedler, and Mr. Paleologou please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the Hon. Jim Antoine, minister of aboriginal affairs, Minister of Transportation, and Minister of Public Works and Services for the Northwest Territories, and his executive assistant, Mr. Pietro de Bastiani. They're participating in the Meet the North conference. Hailing from the land of gold and diamonds, they're seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask them now to rise and receive the usual cordial welcome of this Assembly.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of petitions from concerned residents of Cold Lake urging the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to consult with Albertans on the problems with the current Canada pension plan and to discuss alternatives.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm presenting today a petition signed by 63 Albertans which petitions this Assembly "to urge the Government of Alberta not to pass Bill 37, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 1998."

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I ask that the petition I tabled on November 16 in opposition to Bill 37 now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to pass Bill 37, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petitions I had introduced the other day now be read and received, please.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to recognize the disadvantaged position of renters in the current Calgary apartment market, and take steps to ensure that safe, affordable accommodation is available to every Albertan.

We the undersigned residents of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta not to pass Bill 37, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 1998.

head: Notices of Motions

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I'm giving notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions and motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: We've got quite a list today, hon. members. We'll begin with the Minister of Health.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table five copies of the Alberta Physician Interest Listing. This document was developed by the Alberta Partnership for Health in co-operation with the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Alberta Medical Association to assist patients seeking physicians with a particular specialty or interest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. First the answers for Written Question 33, and second, we have the answers for Written Question 40.

MR. DAY: Four tablings, Mr. Speaker, two of which refer to the provincial judges and masters in chamber pension plan. One is for the year ended March 31, '97, the other for March 31, '98, and the annual report for the year ended March 31, '98, for Members of the Legislative Assembly pension plan, reminding members and citizens also that this is previous years and up to '98 accumulation, because in fact we are and continue to be the only

Legislature without an ongoing pension plan for MLAs, the only one in Canada in that particular classification, which gives us great joy.

Mr. Speaker, I might also add that I'll be tabling the Alberta government official response to recommendations from the Auditor General. We are not of course required to make this response, but we do that because we see these recommendations as an opportunity to further improve government accountability. I'll just add that the Auditor General made 51 recommendations. We accepted them all: 44 in entirety, four in principle, and three have been partially accepted. I know members would want to refer to some of the comments in his report, which include for instance that Albertans now have the most informative set of public accounts in Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a number of tablings. The first filing is copies of a letter I sent earlier today to the Canada 2010 Olympic Winter Games bid team congratulating them on a terrific bid proposal.

Secondly, copies of letters of congratulations that I sent earlier to Alberta-based swimmers who won medals at the Speedo FINA world championships held last weekend in Edmonton.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to file copies of the Human Rights Day package developed by the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission in honour of the commission's 25th anniversary this year. This package is being distributed to schools and other organizations to commemorate international Human Rights Day on December 10. Congratulations to Charlach Mackintosh, the chairman of the commission, and all commission members.

Mr. Speaker, on your behalf I wish to file copies of an information package provided to you by Amnesty International in recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations universal declaration of human rights. I will provide each member of this Assembly with his or her own complete package from Amnesty International.

Finally, I'm filing copies of an information bulletin I'm issuing today regarding the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, which is on December 6. As well I'm filing a joint declaration on violence against women that is being issued nationally by federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for women's issues across Canada.

December 6 is the anniversary of the killing of 14 women in Montreal in 1989, and this tragic anniversary has become a day in Canada when all Canadians mourn violence against women and renew their pledge to eliminate it. Members will be interested to know that on December 6 the flags on top of the Legislature will be lowered to half mast to honour and commemorate women who have suffered violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to table two reports, the first being the Municipal Payment Schedule for the 1998 senatorial selection, the election process, in response to questions raised last Wednesday during supplementary estimates.

The second is a report prepared by Deloitte & Touche entitled CKUA Radio Foundation: Investigation Pursuant to the Charitable Fund-raising Act.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table today a short document that contains selected statements drawn from postcards received from 2,693 Albertans opposed to Bill 219.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling today copies of five letters from five constituents of Edmonton-Ellerslie who support changes in the Alberta Insurance Act and regulations.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a copy of the 1987-88 and the 1988-89 Education estimates showing that funding for private schools decreased during the time the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Education.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, sir. I'm tabling the requisite number of copies of a piece of correspondence dated November 3, 1998, from a constituent in Calgary-Buffalo to the hon. Premier urging implementation of the UN convention on the rights of the child.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North-Hill.

MR. MAGNUS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have 12 documents to table today. They are all annual general reports, and I'll go through my list fairly rapidly. They are from the Certified General Accountants Association of Alberta, the Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association, the Alberta Dental Assistants Association, the College of Alberta Psychologists, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, the Alberta Opticians Association, the Alberta Registered Professional Foresters Association, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta, and the Certified Management Accountants of Alberta as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

MR. MELCHIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly Mike Gladstone, who happens to be a friend and a constituent of Calgary-North West. Mike is currently studying political science at the University of Calgary. He's been a long-time supporter and is interested in politics and in the government. He was recently elected president of the PC youth association, and we'd ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce students from Father Mercredi high school in Fort McMurray. They also belong to SADD, Students Against Drunk Drivers. In fact this morning they launched their new campaign with the minister of transportation, who was presented with the beautiful T-shirt that he's wearing. I'd like to introduce Jill McIntosh, Ryan and Kim Forest, Michael Mayuk, Dustin Belanger, Kim Richard, Paul Hutchins, and Alanna Prouty. Also I understand that just joining them are students from Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan as well, with advisors Elaine Stoyles

and Gil Espejo. I would ask the House to give them all, as they stand, a very warm welcome on this positive initiative.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for children's services.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly some really great people who are from Edmonton, first-time visitors to the Legislature and family members of a lady who works for me, Ms Lorraine Ellis. I'd like to introduce Mrs. Elizabeth Ellis; Reverend Minnie Mueller, evangelist with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada; Reverend Hilda Siggelkow, director of Alberta women's ministries, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada; and Reverend Ernie Siggelkow, Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. They are standing, and I would wish them a warm welcome from the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three classes of grade 6 students from Kildare school in my constituency of Edmonton-Manning. There are 80 students up above. This school has lots to boast about. The school is 30 years old, and they have 560 students in the school with 420 of them in the Mandarin program. They are also a good feeder to Londonderry junior high and LaZerte high schools. Accompanying them are teachers Mrs. Lorraine Goruk, Mrs. Robin Thay, Mrs. Wendy Mitchell, and vice-principal and grade 6 teacher, Mark Stukoski, and parent Mrs. Yang. I'd like you to rise and get the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of Albertans who have been working in support of Alberta's health care system and helping Albertans to receive necessary health care information. The individuals are Teren Clarke, director of client services, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Northwest Territories; Annette Martin, regional director, Canadian Liver Foundation, Alberta and Northwest Territories; and Candy L. Holland, communications officer, Alberta Medical Association. They represent the Alberta Partnership for Health, which today released the Physicians Interest Listing that I tabled a few moments ago. The listing provides information on Alberta physicians and their special medical interests and training and will help patients seeking physicians with a particular interest in their area of medical need. I would ask them to stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you 25 bright, energetic students from the Thorhild school. They're seated in the members' gallery. Accompanying them is teacher Mr. Jim Stambaugh; parents Mrs. Margaret Arbeau, Mrs. Laurie Kapach, Mrs. Susan Pruss, Mrs. Debbie Oleksyn, Mrs. Petra Roche, Mr. Allen Pasay, and Mrs. Suzanne Turchanski. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

MR. SEVERTSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature a resident of the Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency. Marilyn Haley is presently the executive director of PC Alberta and has been since May '98. Before that she had two terms as president of the PC Association of Alberta. I'd ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature a constituent from Bonnyville-Cold Lake, the editor of the *Bonnyville Nouvelle*, Mr. Darren Pinkoski. He is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

head: Oral Question Period

THE SPEAKER: First main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Education Funding

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and the Minister of Education have indicated a lack of confidence in school boards to handle fiscal affairs. The minister dismisses school fund-raising as insignificant, and this morning many trustees left their annual meeting less than satisfied with the minister's comments. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier do what his Minister of Education failed to do this morning and acknowledge the vital role that school trustees play and thank them for coping with unprecedented cuts by his government?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I have no problem thanking very publicly school trustees throughout this province for the tremendous work they do.

Relative to what the hon. minister may or may not have said at the meeting this morning, I'll have the hon. minister reply, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't there.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, one of the main themes of the address that I gave this morning was with respect to the importance of the partnerships that we enjoy in education and a willingness, both on the part of the government and on school boards, to work together in dealing with important issues in education.

Mr. Speaker, I've made myself available always to members of the Alberta School Boards Association and individual boards. I've been to many parts of this province. I believe that I've been to all school boards in this province, and I've been to hundreds of schools. I enjoy a good working relationship with those school boards. I have a great deal of respect for people that we elect to school boards. There will always be differences of opinion as to how we accomplish the goals, but I want to make it clear that whether we're in government on this side of the House or school trustees, we're all involved in the business of making sure that we have an education system that is solid for our children, and that's what we are trying to accomplish.

1:50

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, does the Premier agree with his minister's remarks this morning that good is good enough when it comes to public education?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't at the meeting this morning when the hon. minister gave his address, but I can reiterate what the hon. minister has said, that he is vitally concerned about education. It has come to my attention and I have been advised that the Catholic board of education in the city of Calgary has indicated that this minister is the best minister they've ever had.

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I merely wanted to clarify what it was I said this morning. What I said is that I wanted trustees to share the message with people in Alberta that our schools are more than good; they're very good and occasionally excellent. We don't want a system that's very good and occasionally excellent. What we want is a system that's excellent and occasionally only very good.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, what will it take for this Premier to believe public opinion, parents, teachers, and trustees that his government's funding policies are putting public education at risk?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't think for one moment that our funding policies are putting teachers or students at risk. When you look at what this government has done relative to restructuring education in this province -- we have taken literally millions of dollars out of administration and put those dollars into the classrooms. We have created a system that provides equity and equality for all students throughout the province. We have restored funding to ECS. We have committed significant dollars to special-needs students. We have committed significant dollars to early intervention programs, particularly with respect to literacy, to make sure that students can read by the time they reach grade 3. We have committed significant dollars to inner-city schools. We have committed significant dollars to address the problems of sparsity and distance as it relates to transportation.

All of these programs go directly to the classrooms. Our commitment to education -- and this came out of the Growth Summit last October in Edmonton. We made the commitment at that time that education would be our number one priority, and it is.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Second main question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

West Edmonton Mall Refinancing

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, the government is on the verge of adjourning this all-too-short fall session of the Legislature, and Albertans still don't have the special report of the Auditor General into the West Edmonton Mall refinancing. My questions are to the Premier. Will the Premier commit that he will make it his business to release the special report of the Auditor General to the public the very day it is received by government?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have a problem, but I will take the advice of the Auditor General relative to how the report is going to be released. It may very well be that he himself will release the report. I have given an undertaking already that the report will be made public.

Mr. Speaker, relative to the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition's remarks vis-à-vis the length of the session, I would like to thank the Liberals for being so accommodating and making the session as short as it has been. Thank you.

MRS. MacBETH: Nice try. Nice try.

Will the Premier promise that his statutory declaration will be released in its entirety regardless of the timing or the conclusion of the Auditor General?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that is entirely up to the Auditor General. I understand that he has asked a number of individuals for statutory declarations. What he wants to release is entirely up to him. Certain questions I know were asked of me. I don't know what was asked of other individuals. Those questions were contained in 16 pages. I answered them truthfully and honestly. I forwarded that statutory declaration to the Auditor General, and he will take that into account along with all the other evidence provided in preparing his report. As to how he wants that report released, I will follow his guidance.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier promise Albertans that if political interference is identified in the Auditor General's report, he will immediately call a public inquiry?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, again, that question has been raised time and time and time again. I have indicated publicly on a number of occasions and I will indicate here for the edification of the opposition Liberals, because obviously they haven't been listening, that if the Auditor General so recommends, we will take the appropriate action.

THE SPEAKER: Third main question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: I've designated the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Three Sisters Resorts Inc.

MR. SAPERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On September 16, 1993, the former Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Tourism wrote to the president of Three Sisters Resorts Inc. The letter was tabled yesterday. I quote from that letter.

I know that there is work yet to be done in terms of securing the remaining financing . . . If this letter is of assistance to you in positioning your proposal for financing to the appropriate institutions, please feel free to use it accordingly.

My questions today are for the Premier. What is the relationship between the \$5 million line of credit approved by the Banff branch of the Treasury Branch to Three Sisters Resorts in December 1993 and that letter from the deputy minister?

MR. KLEIN: As far as I know, Mr. Speaker, absolutely none. There was no reference to any specific financial institution in that letter. The bottom line of the letter -- and I just don't have it in front of me. Here it is. The last line of the letter says very simply, "If this letter is of assistance to you in positioning your proposal for financing to appropriate institutions, please feel free to use it accordingly." There was no instruction, no direction of any sort to take it to a particular or specific financial institution.

MR. SAPERS: How often, Mr. Premier, do deputy ministers write comfort and promotion letters for businesses trying to arrange financing from the Alberta Treasury Branch?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how often or how prevalent the practice is, but certainly it is the role and the responsibility of the department of economic development to promote business in Alberta and to be as helpful as the department possibly can be in facilitating economic growth and prosperity in this province.

MR. SAPERS: Mr. Speaker, given the claim of the former deputy that the government provided no grants to Three Sisters, will the Premier explain the \$1.118 million given to the resort during the '93-94 fiscal year by the department of economic development?

2:00

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, that grant was given through the tourism development assistance program. It was given not only to Three Sisters to help prepare their environmental impact assessment, but it was given to the West Castle resort project as well. As I understand it, it was a perfectly legitimate grant under an existing program at that particular time. Those programs no longer exist, and such a grant would not be made today.

Speaker's Ruling Questions about Noncurrent Issues

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, this is question period to deal with current matters, essentially, in the Assembly. We have another process in the Assembly called Public Accounts, and Public Accounts deals with an overview of a particular department's budget in the following fiscal year. The Speaker is a former member of Public Accounts and can recall a discussion on this matter going back three or four or five years ago. So perhaps a review of public accounts might be essential as well.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Education Funding (continued)

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Due to this government's underfunding, many school boards in Alberta are being forced to run huge deficits. Recent financial statements show that the Calgary and Edmonton public school boards alone have had to take out \$70 million in bank loans to stay afloat. To the Premier: would the Premier admit that his government has balanced the province's books on the backs of every school, child, teacher, and school trustee in this province? If not, why not?

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Speaker, we have not balanced our books on the backs of children in school or the teachers or the education system generally. I pointed out just a few moments ago to the opposition Liberals that we have indeed made substantial significant reinvestments in education and plan to make even more.

I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have addressed this question in this House before in response to members from both sides of the House, and I wish to reiterate that we have had significant reinvestment in the area of education. In particular we have put money where it matters the most, and that's the classrooms.

I want to point out that from 1994-95 to the current year of 1998-99, we have reinvested \$400 million into the instruction block for education. From the years 1996 through to the year 2000, we'll be reinvesting about a half a billion dollars, roughly a 15 percent increase, far greater than the rate of inflation and the

rate of growth of the number of students together, in specific areas like special needs, which school boards consistently came back with as an area where they spent more money than we gave them grants for. We asked them: approximately how much more are you spending? Their answer was about 30 percent. That's why with respect to special-needs students we have increased most areas of special-needs grants by 30 percent.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are doing things in a different way. We are targeting dollars to those areas that need it the most. We don't expect school boards to balance their budgets to the penny each and every year. Yes, while it's true that a school board, for example, like Edmonton public might have a projected deficit of \$11 million or \$12 million this year, expressed as a percentage of their overall budget of nearly half a billion dollars, we can understand why they might not come in to the penny. I express confidence in our school boards that they will be able to deal with these deficits and that our reinvestment will help them deal with those particular situations.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What advice would the Premier have for the Calgary board of education in dealing with their financial crisis other than to layoff teachers, increase class sizes, or roll back staff salaries?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly we aren't asking them to lay off teachers or do anything else, but we are asking them to use all possible diligence to examine their expenditures and find, if possible, ways to reduce those expenditures and do like we had to do as a government. We had to learn to think differently, and we had to find new and more effective and more efficient ways of doing things.

I would like to remind the hon. member that when we underwent massive restructuring of government, including the whole governance model and the way we deliver educational services, Mr. Speaker, we had a \$3.4 billion annual structural deficit and that if we had kept on spending the way we were, we would be bankrupt. Instead of looking at savings, real dollars that we can now reinvest in important issues like health and education, at this very moment we would be facing bankruptcy as a province. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, let's just continue to move, please. I have a list of 19 hon. members who've advised me they want to raise a question, so let's just keep moving with a little more brevity.

Hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How can the Premier justify letting MLAs get steady salary increases each year tied to average weekly earnings and then ask Calgary schoolteachers to accept a salary freeze as a result of the government-induced funding crisis in Calgary?

Speaker's Ruling Questions outside Government Responsibility

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Premier, please.

The hon. member knows full well that decisions made with respect to remuneration for Members of the Legislative Assembly are made by an all-party committee called the Members' Services Committee. It is not the government that makes these decisions. In fact salaries for cabinet ministers, members of Executive Council, are not set in the province of Alberta by members of the government. They are set by the all-party Members' Services Committee.

Do you want to say something in answer to that one?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, you said it all. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Well, I did not mean to be in the debate here. I just meant to clarify and keep this going.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

National Unity

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: Okay. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul has been recognized. He has the floor.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again last night we witnessed on TV the election of yet another sovereigntist government in the province of Quebec. The people of la belle province gave us their election option. We have seen the Lévesque government, the Parizeau government, and now the Bouchard government all with the same separatist agenda. Aside from the separation issue Alberta and Quebec have long been strong partners in negotiation of federal/provincial arrangements. My question is to the Premier of this province. In the aftermath of yesterday's election is the Calgary accord an option that we can look at?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Calgary accord is always an option we can look at, and I would hope that the government of Quebec would adopt, like all the other Legislatures have adopted, the Calgary accord, because it is a very good statement relative to what it means to be Canadian and what it means to be an equal partner in the federation.

With this election behind us I think we can now get back to the business of improving Canada for Albertans as well as all Canadians. We do want to see success on the social union talks. Those talks really go to the heart of article 7 in the Calgary declaration that talks about co-operative federalism. The election does not change our position on any of these issues. In fact, it strengthens our resolve. It is as important now as it ever was to demonstrate that Canada can evolve for the benefit of all Canadians and in accordance with the Calgary declaration.

So we will continue to ask the federal government, along with our provincial counterparts, to take seriously its commitments to flexible federalism and to co-operation on the social union. Through this we would also like to see a clear direction on fiscal federalism whereby the federal government stops its unilateral use of federal spending powers in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

MR. LANGEVIN: Mr. Speaker, being Canadian first is the only option to keep Canada together. Mr. Premier, how can we convince those in Quebec who have a separatist agenda that being Canadian first would be good for their province also?

2:10

MR. KLEIN: Well, you know, fundamentally not too much has changed in Quebec. Basically we have a mirror image of the government that we had in 1994 in Quebec. While I'm sure that all of us would have preferred to have seen the election of a federalist government in Quebec, we have been through this before. We will continue our efforts to convince the people of Quebec, not the political leadership, because we know what the agenda is, that indeed it is in their interest to stay part of this great family of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that the popular support for

sovereignty, the support for sovereignty amongst the people of Quebec, is actually lower now than it was during the Parizeau election of 1994.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: on the social union talks, how quickly can the province move on this issue?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that my office has been contacted by Mr. Romanow, who is chair of the Premier's council until Mr. Bouchard, as a matter of fact, takes over in August of 1999. He has asked for a conference call of all the Premiers on Friday to map out a plan of action as to how we pursue this whole matter of the social union.

I can tell the hon. member this: that the federal government requested that we not talk about this issue and raise it and give it profile during the Quebec election. Well, now that the election is over, I think we can start to make some progress on this particular matter. I've talked to the Prime Minister about it. He has indicated that the federal government is willing to co-operate, not on all points but on many of the points. Prior to the February or March budget, whenever the federal budget is tabled in 1999, we hope to have some resolution to this issue.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Education Funding

(continued)

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cash-strapped schools are turning to user fees and fund-raisers to make up for government underfunding. The Minister of Education is in denial, indicating that local funds are merely flow-through dollars for cafeterias, lockers, and the like. My questions are to the Minister of Education. If that's the case, then why have school-generated funds gone up by 625 percent in the Peace River school division, 840 percent in Westwind, and doubled to \$10 million in Edmonton Catholic?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, individual school boards have their own policies with respect to appropriate amounts that will go into fund-raising or with respect to school-generated funds. It ranges widely, not only among and between school jurisdictions but also among and between schools. So, for example, the Peace Wapiti board's average is \$45 per student per year. In speaking with students and parents in the Peace Wapiti school division, they seem to think that they're not missing out on anything.

The highest ones in the province are Elk Island. In Elk Island the school-generated funds amount to about \$480 per student per year, but, Mr. Speaker, we should note that that does not equate to fund-raising. What happens is that all of the money that may be generated by a school division for things like cafeteria receipts, school uniforms for sports teams and such -- those are all added in together. In looking at the particular case of Elk Island school division, they have to answer questions of their constituency of voters as to why school-generated funds are so high. But in looking at the actual numbers, about half of it is with respect to cafeteria receipts, and another portion of it relates to school uniforms for sports teams. The actual amount for fund-raising out of that \$480 per student is about 5 or 6 percent, and a very small portion of that goes towards things like software.

So, Mr. Speaker, there may be increases in individual school boards or at individual schools, depending on the policy that the school board has put in place, but ultimately we give school

boards the flexibility to establish policies for those school-generated funds.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the same minister: if schools were adequately funded, would school-generated funds have increased over 300 percent in the last three years?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, schools are appropriately funded in the province of Alberta. There will always be an unlimited list of good things that you could do if you had more money. There is no doubt about that.

But I note that in the satisfaction survey that we do of parents, 88 percent of parents in the province of Alberta are satisfied with the quality of education. In excess of 90 percent of students themselves who were surveyed say they are satisfied with the quality of education. Of course there are more things that you could do. In making sure that our students are prepared for life after high school, whether they go into the postsecondary system or directly into the workplace, we believe we have a very good education system that is occasionally excellent and that we should start judging the quality of our education system based on outputs and not on inputs.

DR. MASSEY: My question is to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. When will the minister implement the Auditor General's recommendation that there be more accurate reporting so that we can know exactly how much money schools are being forced to raise?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a very good set of books in the province of Alberta, and we do ask school boards to provide audited financial statements at the end of each year. So with respect to the value of school-generated funds, we think we have fairly accurate numbers, and in the province it roughly amounts to something around \$120 million per year. That has been a relatively stable figure over the last five years.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glen-garry.

Fletcher's Fine Foods Inc.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are hearing some good news today regarding the former Maple Leaf packing plant located in the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, which I am privileged to represent. My constituents and Edmontonians are, of course, overjoyed at the prospect of a new meat-handling facility bringing much needed jobs. My constituents and I want to thank everyone, including Edmonton's Mayor Bill Smith, Fletcher's, and the department of public works for ensuring that Edmontonians continue to have a viable meat packing and processing industry. My questions are all to the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services. Could the minister give this Assembly some further details regarding projected construction start and completion times?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, Mr. Speaker, the construction schedule is basically to start as quickly as we can get the site ready for it. The projected opening when the facility will be operational is the fall of 1999. So roughly a year from now it should be operational. I would like to add that it's going to be a first-class processing facility.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How many and

what kind of jobs will be available as the plant comes into production?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, initially when the plant opens, there should be a projected 150 jobs. These will be of the of the semiskilled and skilled variety to do with the processing of pork primarily. Again I would like to stress that this is hopefully just the beginning of a greater presence of this company in Edmonton.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the site is 47 acres. What is planned for the remaining 20?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, we've had an ongoing dialogue with the city of Edmonton, and certainly their administration and the mayor have been very helpful in finalizing this. The member is quite correct in saying that 27 acres of the 47-acre site will be going to Fletcher's for their operations. The city of Edmonton will benefit from the other 20 acres. When the paperwork is finalized, they'll be receiving it for \$1.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glen-garry, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

2:20

Seniors' Programs

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister responsible for seniors: when was membership finalized on the committee charged with reviewing the impact of an aging population, as announced in the Speech from the Throne?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd have to check on the exact date, but it was within the last two to three weeks that the membership was finalized on that committee. I can certainly give the actual date to the member and would be happy to pass him a note with that information.

MR. BONNER: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: can the minister inform the House when the committee first convened and how many times it has met to date?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the committee has had one organizational meeting. They have had a second session, and it's important to note and to recall that when I made this information available -- and I believe I discussed this in the House in this session. The committee is charged with a number of requests. The first one is to look at short-term issues, the issues that are paramount for seniors at this time. Secondly, they are to look at long-term concerns and impact of an aging population on government programs and policies. This goes out to the year 2015, and I would expect this information to be available for a seniors' conference which will be held in the fall of 1999, coinciding with the International Year of Older Persons declared by the United Nations. My further expectation from that committee is that a final report will be tabled with the minister early in the year 2000 after the seniors' summit.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the minister guarantee that the full and complete findings of this committee will be reported and not shredded should her government not agree with the findings, like they did with the last seniors' report?

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, my first impulse was not to dignify that with an answer. The second one is, if the hon. member, rather than reading prepared questions, would have listened to my first answer, he would have understood that the findings of this committee will be reported at a summit and further discussed there and that a final report will be returned to me early in the year 2000.

Mr. Speaker, this government, this ministry has a record of acting on the advice it receives from seniors. I think the hon. member does the very distinguished membership of this committee a total disservice by his suggestions. I have every confidence in this committee, its leadership and its membership, that they will in fact look at the best interests of seniors, the programs that are of importance to seniors to enable them to live in dignity and independence in this province. I and my colleagues in government look forward to a positive working relationship with this committee.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Educational Consortia

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are six regional consortia operating in the province that provide regional in-service programming and professional development for members of our education system. These consortia were given funding and a three-year mandate ending August 31 of this year. My question is to the Minister of Education. Does the provincial government continue to support regional consortia? [interjection]

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I heard one member say that this was a good question, and it is. When the regional consortia were set up in 1995, they were given a three-year commitment for funding that included infrastructure funding and program funding. The guideline for the consortia, when they were established at the outset, was that there would be an opportunity for them to have consideration given for further infrastructure funding after three years but that after the three-year period they were expected to operate on a full cost recovery basis.

Well, Mr. Speaker, good work is being done by the consortia, and as a consequence we provided consortia with infrastructure funding for a fourth year in the amount of \$133,000. This will give, in my opinion, additional time for those regional consortia to make the transition to being self-sustaining in their operations.

MR. JOHNSON: More specifically, what were the consortia set up to do, and how do we assess their effectiveness?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the consortia have a number of different purposes, not the least of which is to support the continuation of board education plans, school plans, and, of course, the government's three-year plan for education. They also provide a co-ordinated and collaborative model for the delivery of ongoing professional development. They've also been set up for the purpose of implementation of school-based decision-making in school councils. So there are a number of purposes that they serve, and I'm happy to say that each consortia provides an annual report and audited financial statements.

In terms of the results they achieve, Mr. Speaker, from September of 1996 to August 1997 consortia provided 244 programs to over 13,000 participants at an average fee of less than \$30 per person. I think it speaks well of the collaborative model where education partners -- universities, colleges, school

superintendents, the ATA -- have worked with this enabling structure for professional development for teachers, support staff, administrators, and parents.

MR. JOHNSON: My final question to the same minister: is there any overlap or duplication of in-service programming of the regional consortia with the in-service programs provided by the professional arm of the Alberta Teachers' Association, or are the programs and services complementary?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, because of the collaborative nature of how the consortia work, they work with all of these partner associations: as I indicated, the school superintendents, the Alberta School Boards Association, the Alberta school business officials association, the Alberta home and school association, and also of course, the Alberta Teachers' Association with the universities and with the Department of Education. As a result of this collaboration and co-ordination, there is no duplication.

Since beginning operations in 1996, the consortia have become both a regional and provincial professional development resource, one that we on the government side receive many responses in strong support of. These consortia do connect schools, school councils, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and, Mr. Speaker, through that collaboration, they do avoid duplication.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Telephone Health Care Advice

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the entire term of office of this government we've seen strong support for an expanded role for private health care, whether it's private clinics or private hospitals. The apparent goal is to shift the cost of health care onto the backs of Albertans. Now Calgarians are confronted with extra fees and charges if they access medical advice by means of a 1-900 phone number. My question is to the Minister of Health this afternoon. What specific action will this minister take to ensure that patients are not charged for primary health care advice given over the telephone?

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, it would appear that in Calgary some practitioners have become aware of a program or a service which has been established in eastern Canada, in New Brunswick. As you know, New Brunswick is currently ruled by a Liberal government. Nevertheless, they have had a service offered to all parts of Canada, as I understand it, providing medical advice. I believe they charge \$3.95 a minute, and a person can ring up and ask questions and receive medical advice. That particular service is an uninsured service, outside the Canada Health Act, and evidently there is some interest in that type of service in Calgary.

2:30

However, Mr. Speaker, if this particular proposal in Calgary is dealing with normal required follow-up service to a patient who has been treated within the public health care system or has seen the doctor, this would be, I think, deemed an insured service, would be covered, and handled appropriately.

MR. DICKSON: My follow-up question to the same minister would be this: given that an increasing number of family physicians, particularly in Edmonton and Calgary, are no longer taking new patients, how is this minister going to ensure that this new

service being provided in Calgary doesn't further curtail access when Calgarians need access for primary health care?

MR. JONSON: Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, I know that we're not currently debating it, but Bill 37 would have much improved the situation with respect to dealing precisely in legislative terms with events of this particular type. Nevertheless, we will do what we can, and certainly we will investigate the situation. We will refer the matter to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, if it has not already been referred there, and follow up to make sure that there is nothing occurring here that is deliberately designed to be detrimental to the public health care system.

MR. DICKSON: Well, beyond generalities, my final question to the minister would be this: what specific, concrete action are this minister and his department going to take to ensure that the service is adequately monitored and that Albertans can be sure that this isn't a further bar or impediment to getting medical advice when they require it?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, I do have to emphasize that the piece of legislation I referred to was designed to provide the legislative mechanism with its attendant regulations to deal more precisely and thoroughly with these types of cases. However, because this government is very supportive of the principles of the Canada Health Act, of a good public health care system in this province, we will do everything we can to ensure that the individual's access to health care is not being inhibited by this particular type of action. I mentioned the referral to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. We will look at the existing legislation, although I do not think we have the precise powers that we need in this regard. But we will look at the formation of policy and every other alternative.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Law Enforcement

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Justice and the minister of transportation. My first question is to the Minister of Justice. We have a perfect opportunity to show that our government is serious about crime in this province. Bill 1 is a first, and our new Traffic Safety Act shows that again we are taking a stand. There are people who obey the rules, but there are some people who exploit the cracks in the system and pull ahead every time. Would the minister consider the seizure of a motor vehicle if police believe the vehicle is being used to transport persons to a bawdy house, procuring, and other offences in relation to prostitution?

MR. HAVELOCK: I think I can answer that, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The point is that in question period we don't seek legal opinions.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I believe it's a general enough question regarding the issue of prostitution, if you'll allow me to address it. If I step over the line, then I know you'll make me go back over the line.

Certainly, although the opposition obviously has no interest in the issue, Mr. Speaker, we're very concerned about prostitution in this province, especially as it impacts young people. At the meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers Alberta in

conjunction with Manitoba actually pushed for an amendment to the Criminal Code which would allow for the seizure of motor vehicles from johns charged and convicted of prostitution and related offences, and we're prepared to look very carefully at any measures in this area.

Now, in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, legislation has been enacted to permit the seizure of motor vehicles used in prostitution-related offences. We are monitoring the success of that. It does give rise to some problems; for example, the cost of seizing and storing vehicles, possible conflict between provincial law and federal jurisdiction pertaining to criminal law. Also, the Manitoba law has not yet been tested. Nevertheless, difficulties like that should not preclude us from doing what is right and taking a hard look at this issue.

In addition, there is a federal/provincial/territorial working group comprised of justice officials that have been working on a report. We expect that report will be coming out shortly. What I would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is carefully review that report before Alberta takes a look at implementing legislation along the lines of what the member is suggesting. However, philosophically I do support pursuing this matter. I think it's a good concept, and we should take a very serious look at it. We want to see how it's going to impact in Manitoba, but I think it's a good concept, and we'll certainly consider it.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second and third questions are to the minister of transportation, and these questions can be done under the Highway Traffic Act. Would the minister consider taking away driver's licences from johns convicted of communicating with a prostitute under the age of 18?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anything we can do to prevent or to stop teenage prostitution we certainly have the obligation to look at. From my perspective at least, if there's something that we can do to help eliminate teenage prostitution, we will certainly as a department do everything in our power. We'll co-operate with Justice. We'll work together to try and eliminate teenage prostitution.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Jumping to another subject now, given the recent amendments for impaired driving, would the minister consider, for people caught under a Criminal Code suspension under the Highway Traffic Act, increasing the fines, which currently are \$2,000, from \$5,000 to \$50,000 plus all costs for towing and impoundment?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: I assume the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is referring to yesterday's announcement from Ontario on the increase in fines for drivers caught driving while under a Criminal Code suspension. The program also includes a new impoundment program that may indeed seize any vehicle driven by a suspended driver for a minimum of 45 days. Currently in Alberta for anyone caught while driving a vehicle with their operator's licence suspended for a Criminal Code offence, indeed the vehicle is seized for 30 days. We're looking at expanding that to 60 days. In fact, that's part of their proposal that we will be bringing forward.

This is something that's very critical and something we have to take time and assess, because we're getting so many repeat offences where the people are lending vehicles, where people are using the same vehicle while their licences are suspended. It's a problem, because that licence has been suspended for a reason, and we have to deal with that issue, and we have to deal with that problem.

This morning we dealt with another issue, and that's the whole

issue of drinking and driving. Very critical. I'm very proud of the children that came all the way from Fort McMurray this morning to be part of this. That is true conviction. That is something we really want to be proud of, and we have to be proud of the people who came from Fort McMurray to express their concerns. The poem that was read this morning was something that really, really will move all people to tears, as it did the group this morning. That is truly something that we have to do, because our highways are not safe.

We lost 400 and some people to fatalities on our highways last year, and that's not right. We lost over a hundred drinking and driving last year. Of those hundred many were innocent, third-party people who actually had nothing to do with drinking and driving. They were the innocent third party, Mr. Speaker. We have to find ways of dealing with that. That's why we're looking at extended suspensions, multiple suspensions for those who have actually been suspended the first time. The second time will be 60 days, and if indeed that doesn't teach the lesson, then we may have to look at other ways of dealing with that particular element. This is critical. It's important to the safety of the lives of Albertans, and we don't know who that next Albertan may be who may be affected.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, you were rising on . . .

2:40

MS OLSEN: A point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. We'll deal with that.

Speaker's Ruling Brevity in Question Period

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, today we had 11 sets of questions, which is above the norm, but I want to let hon. members know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, the hon. Member for Little Bow, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, and the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler remain on my list. That's the longest list we've had, by the way, in all of 1998. But the point is that while 11 sets of questions is a little bit above the norm, brevity is also a good requirement, because all hon. members should have an opportunity to raise their questions. That's a failing of the Speaker, and the Speaker apologizes to those individuals for not being able to be recognized.

We'll be moving on to Members' Statements in 30 seconds from now, and we have several today. We'll proceed on this basis: first of all with the hon. Member for Calgary-West, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, then the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort. We'll recognize the first one in 30 seconds.

In the meantime, an hon. member has asked for the opportunity to revert to introductions, and I'm sure you'll agree with me that that would be appropriate.

head: Introduction of Guests

(*reversion*)

THE SPEAKER: We'll go, then, with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to have you join me and encourage all members of the

Assembly to welcome a group of very determined students from Glenora elementary school, accompanied by a no less determined group of parents and their teacher. Neither schedules nor rain nor sleet nor snow will keep them from visiting this Assembly to see democracy in progress. This group of half a dozen adults and some three dozen students have made it their first priority to be here today as they could think of nothing more important to occupy their time this afternoon than to spend it with us. So I would ask the grade 6 class from Glenora elementary school and their parent-sponsors Jeannie Birch, Gordon Englis, Margie Davidson, Brenda Blakely, Sheila Greckol, Denise Assaly, and Tara Jones to please stand and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Members' Statements

2010 Winter Olympics

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Speaker, today the Canadian Olympic Association announced that Vancouver/Whistler has been selected to represent Canada in bidding for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. I'm sure all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating our neighbours in British Columbia and wishing them well as they continue through the international bid process. However, my purpose in rising today is to congratulate the enthusiastic and hardworking members of Calgary's 2010 bid committee. Well done.

Even though Calgary was not chosen to represent our country in the international bid process, Albertans should feel proud knowing that the Calgary team put forward an excellent bid on behalf of the province. I'm sure that the extremely high quality of bids made the Canadian Olympic Association's task of selecting a host city very difficult.

Calgary has a tremendous legacy of world-class athletic facilities, proven, devoted, and hardworking volunteers, and the experience and know-how to host a wonderful event. The city proved this during the 1988 Olympics and many other times before and since. Anyone who has participated in any of the major events Calgary has hosted would agree that Calgarians really know how to welcome the world.

On behalf of all Albertans and this government I would like to congratulate the bid committee chair, Patricia Trotter. Patricia has demonstrated extraordinary commitment, patience, and determination throughout the bid process. Patricia worked hard to build a talented bid committee, who put together a solid, high-quality bid. I want to acknowledge the excellent work done by each committee member: Jim Dinning, Murray Edwards, Dr. Gene Edworthy, Robert Ellard, Ann MacDiarmid, John Mitchell, Reid Morrison, John Richels, Terry Royer, and Douglas Young.

Calgary's bid committee displayed leadership, class, and good sportsmanship throughout the bid process, which is what sport is all about. The committee and the bid reflected many of the qualities of the province of which we are most proud: Alberta's strength, its warmth and hospitality, and the can-do attitude of its people. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to this team.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Children's Services

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you. Across Canada progressive reforms to address the needs of vulnerable children have been undertaken. The Saskatchewan Children's Advocate, established in 1995, is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. In 1997 a decision was made to further its independence by having the

budget reviewed by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly rather than by the Treasury Board. In 1997 the B.C. Minister of Children and Families commissioned a report on safeguards for children and youth in foster and group-home care. Outcomes included a substantial funding increase to meet current and future needs of children in care, minimum staffing levels per child, caseload standards to allow sufficient time for visits, increase in minimum standard of contact, and the recruitment of foster families from minority cultures.

Last month the Newfoundland Ministry of Health and Community Services introduced a bill entitled An Act Respecting Children, Youth and Family Services, replacing the current Child Welfare Act. This legislation was strongly recommended by frontline child welfare staff, and the new act validates the recommendations. Highlights include a framework to support youth and families, services to 16 and 17 year olds, an arm's-length minister's advisory committee, and a new regional custody review committee, including participation from previous child welfare recipients.

In Alberta such initiatives do not exist. The Children's Advocate is indebted to the government for its office budget and must have permission to release information. Children are allowed to fall through the cracks due to underfunding, lack of resources, and staff turnover. Frontline staff are ignored and blamed for the problems. Alberta continues to ignore 16 and 17 year olds, allowing them to live in limbo until age 18, when they are unceremoniously dumped into the real world, left to fend for themselves without skills and abilities to succeed. This Alberta advantage sounds more like Alberta abandonment when compared to the progressive initiatives undertaken by other provinces.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Conquering Cancer Campaign

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cancer does not discriminate. It can affect anyone. The Alberta Cancer Board is mandated by the Alberta government as the provincial health authority responsible provincewide to provide cancer treatment, research, education, and prevention. To fulfill its responsibility, the board set out to establish the Alberta cancer research endowment fund through the Alberta Cancer Foundation. Earlier this year the Conquering Cancer campaign was launched to raise \$60 million to provide secure, stable, long-term funding for research. A goal of \$30 million is to be reached by the community and the corporate sector, a total they are now working towards, having been matched by the Alberta government. The \$26 million mark has just been reached due to this kind of fund-raising initiative. Success is near, thanks to numerous volunteers across the province giving their time and energy to support the campaign.

The corporate world has also recognized the importance of this initiative. This can be witnessed in the partnership formed by Enbridge Inc., who is underwriting the administration costs of the Conquering Cancer campaign to ensure that every dollar raised will go to the research. Other key corporate citizens that have shown their support, to name just a few: TransCanada Pipelines Limited, Syncrude, Canadian National Railway, the Royal Bank financial group, and many more.

On November 13 we were all proud Albertans as we made international news with the promising new cancer-attacking virus unveiled by Dr. Patrick Lee at the University of Calgary medical school. Albertans and their government are very proud and appreciative of our scientists. Dr. Lee's continued work in this area was made possible through funding provided by the Alberta

Cancer Board. The endowment research fund will provide the resources for such life-impacting and leading scientific work to continue here within our province.

I am confident that with the support of individual Albertans, corporate citizens, and government, the Alberta Cancer Board will meet its critical responsibility to 2.8 million Albertans in the fight against cancer.

Thank you.

2:50

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood on a point of order.

Point of Order Brevity in Question Period

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to refer to *Beauchesne* 417, "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate"; as well as *Beauchesne* 410(7), "Brevity both in questions and answers is of great importance"; and 410(8):

Preambles to questions should be brief and supplementary questions require no preambles. Supplementary questions should flow from the answers of Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, nobody in this Legislature understands the horror of impaired driving more than myself, having policed for 14 years and attended many, many, many accidents in this city where death has occurred. I recognize this is an important subject. However, it took the minister two minutes and 50 seconds to answer the question on driver's licence suspensions. The question, I might add, appears to be a little bit of game playing, considering we're closer to the end of the clock. See, I understand the game to talk out the clock, but this is not a basketball game. This is an opportunity for the opposition to question the ministers on their responsibilities and hold them accountable.

So, Mr. Speaker, I put to you that a violation has occurred under *Beauchesne* 417, and I would request that this forum be used to hold the government accountable and the ministers accountable by the questions that have been asked and that the game be left in the gym.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue of grave importance. This is an issue where we probably had 300 people in attendance in Edmonton today for the kick-off of a campaign. We probably had as many in Calgary, dedicated volunteers. This is something very meaningful to me and to the people of Alberta. We had people that came, 10 schoolchildren that came all the way from Fort McMurray who dedicated two full days to this particular cause. To have someone suggest that this is a game is embarrassing to this Legislature, and I apologize for that type of approach.

This is very, very important to those poor people that are affected through accidents who are totally innocent. To have someone suggest that this is grandstanding, to have someone suggest that we're grandstanding to get the message out -- everyone has clearly recognized throughout Alberta that education is the key component. We can't have enough enforcement officers out there. Surely to God the hon. member must recognize that, as an ex-enforcement officer. It's not possible to have that kind of enforcement out dealing with those kinds of issues. Education is the key component, and to get the message out is so critical. If I have sinned because I've tried to get the message out, then I'm guilty.

THE SPEAKER: On this point of order?

MRS. SOETAERT: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker. The minister has a golden opportunity to do a ministerial statement. In fact, I would respond positively to some of the initiatives that have come forward, certainly from the students from Fort McMurray. However, the appropriate time in question period is to be used to hold the government accountable. My colleague from Edmonton-Norwood already said that this is a serious, serious topic and is in no way undermining that. But the reality of question period is to be succinct, to have succinct answers from the minister, and is not an opportunity for a ministerial statement, which you can still do on TV, on camera, earlier on in the program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HANCOCK: I rise as well to speak to this point of order. I think my colleague the Minister of Transportation and Utilities spoke eloquently about the need to be complete in your answers as well as succinct. The question of brevity is certainly one of subjectivity. One has to determine how long an answer is necessary to appropriately answer a question. That's a job, Mr. Speaker, which I submit you do very well on a daily basis, and you remind us on a daily basis when you believe answers are too long. So it's absolutely unnecessary to continue with a point of order of this nature. In fact, there is no point of order, because if you had determined that the answer was too long, you would have cut off the minister.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek on this point of order. I hope we all remember what the point of order was.

MRS. FORSYTH: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to say a few words in regards to what the Member for Edmonton-Norwood was talking about when she talked about the minister's answer. Quite frankly, it was my question, and I liked the answer, what he had to say. It was something I wanted to hear. So I don't think there is a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Anybody else want to participate on this point of order?

Well, hon. members, today we had 21 individuals who notified the chair that they wanted to participate in the question period. Normally we'll deal with nine to 10 questions. Today we dealt with 11 sets of questions. You've heard a request from the chair, a plea from the chair go out: brief questions, brief answers.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition has heard that plea from the chair. Her questions have been brief. Not all the responses are as brief, as the hope had been from the chair to allow all hon. members to participate, because after all this is the question period, and the purpose is for all hon. members to participate, not just for a handful of hon. members to participate.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood rose on a point of order today, and she cited a couple of citations. In particular she said *Beauchesne* 410, and 410(7) says that "brevity both in questions and answers is of great importance." That was her point of order. She might have also referred to *Beauchesne* 408(2), which says that "answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate."

Well, the questions raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek were actually pretty brief, but the supplementaries did not necessarily tie in exactly with the original question raised, and certainly nothing in her question was said that should provoke debate. She was seeking information with respect to that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood might also have looked at *Beauchesne* 417, which says that "answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not [again] provoke debate." Again, "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate."

The importance of this issue is not the subject of the point of order. All issues are important. The chair views all questions raised from all members to be of equal importance. No questions are better, no one question better than another question. An hon. member would not stand in this Assembly if he or she did not believe that what they were saying was important and was significant. So it is not the importance of the issue, again, in the point of order. It is the rules and the applications of the rules. I heard no suggestion that anybody may have said of grandstanding or anything else. So, you know, hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood, you've come as close as anyone in finding a legitimate point of order.

Now, having dealt with the point of order and having said to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood that she's found the correct citations to deal with it, the fact of the matter is that we've now passed it.

I think the point that the hon. member wanted to raise is the one of brevity and the one of consistency with respect to questions, so I applaud all members who did participate in this exchange with respect to the point of order. I think the point has been made. Certainly I appreciate the response of the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs and Deputy Government House Leader, who has certainly used the word "brevity" once or twice, I do believe, in the comments that he made. As a leader in Executive Council, in his government, where his colleagues will be responding, I'm sure that he will want to reinforce his commitment, again, in the days to come in the same way that other hon. members will want to reinforce their commitment to brevity in questions so that in fact the 16, 17, 18 hon. members who come here to participate will have a chance to participate, and there will simply not be a participation in question period reserved for the general consensus that three should be given to the Leader of the Official Opposition and one to the second party leader, but to have all hon. members truly participate.

So thank you all for your great understanding with respect to the subject at hand.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Third Reading

Bill 215
Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1998

[Adjourned debate November 25: Mr. Broda]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Utilities.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll certainly try and be brief here.

Speaker's Ruling
Speaking Time

THE SPEAKER: Well, no. Hon. minister, please sit down. We've now come to another part of the routine. You now have 20 minutes. Nobody is asking you to be brief. The rules allow you 20 minutes, so wax eloquent.

3:00

Debate Continued

MR. PASZKOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try and do a brief 20 minutes.

First of all, I want to thank the hon. Member for Redwater for bringing forward this bill. This is an important bill. It is, again, a safety bill. It's one that deals with the leading edge of technology. It's one that deals with the new ways of enforcing safety. We're dealing with an issue of critical importance, an issue where we statistically recognize that the majority of urban accidents happen at intersections, and that's not acceptable. We have technology that we can utilize, technology that will benefit, and consequently the onus is upon us to utilize that new technology that's there. Certainly the hon. member has worked very hard in the development of this particular private member's bill. I strongly support him in his initiative and, again, look forward to the passage of this bill. I would encourage all our colleagues in this House to support this bill.

There are many reasons, and certainly the hon. member has laid out the majority of those reasons. Again, from Alberta Transportation and Utilities' approach to traffic safety this is a key ingredient. AT and U this past summer held many public meetings throughout the province. We had meetings in Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Barrhead, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, and we heard a very common concern from those people who took the time from their everyday activities to share with us their concerns about the safety needs in this province as far as traffic is concerned.

The public and the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police are concerned about the number of collisions, particularly that occur at intersections and in urban settings at red lights. The resulting costs to individuals, their families, the health care system, and society as a whole are far too great. The onus is on us to do everything in our power to see that we work with the public and to see that we indeed achieve a better way of getting our children to school and from school and that people, when they leave home to go and do a day's work, are indeed able to come home safe and sound as well. I heard this concern again for the support of Bill 215 in the fall when I met with the Alberta chiefs of police at Taber. This is something that indeed we have recognized as well.

Secondly, Bill 215 reminds Alberta drivers that society won't tolerate the willful disregard of traffic control signals. Given how difficult it is to police all intersections at all times, drivers will know that the deployment of red-light cameras will increase their odds of getting caught.

Red lights exist to regulate traffic at busy intersections. Just try to imagine what it would be like to have intersections without lights at them. Can you imagine the confusion that we would have? Yet despite the advantage of traffic control lights, there are drivers who absolutely refuse to heed the red light and choose to run the light, to race against the light, and that is where pedestrians walking across are at risk. We can't allow that.

Most drivers aren't bad drivers. The traffic safety initiative recognizes this and has targeted their messages to hit home with drivers who simply need a bit of brushing up on their skills. We need to remind drivers about the rules of the road and help them break some of the bad habits that we all generate as we travel through life's way.

The conventional policing methods for combating those running red lights are very difficult. Witnessing and apprehending drivers who run red lights takes up a lot of time, and it's very, very difficult for the enforcement officers to be able to catch these people and to get them off the road. With this new type of technology that we have, it helps in solving the problem. It frees

police officers to make the best use of their time and reduces the danger of attempting to pull over and ticket offenders who choose to run red lights. It's the best use of limited resources without having police officers there to take the time to provide the ticket. Safer, more efficient: these are things that make technology useful. As I mentioned, the onus is upon us to benefit from the modern technology that's coming forward.

In early April of this year Strathcona county installed the first red-light camera in Alberta as a test site. During the first 48 hours the camera detected 113 red-light infractions. During the first hour of operation at this test site there were 25 infractions. That's nearly one red-light infraction every two minutes. Not acceptable. The city of Edmonton also installed a test site last September, and during their first month of operation it recorded 315 infractions. Obviously, we do have a problem.

As you've heard from other speakers, installing red-light cameras, as has been done in other jurisdictions, reduces the incidence of infractions. In fact, the numbers show significant reductions. Considering the numbers we've seen in the test sites in our own area, reduction certainly will work here as well.

There are many reasons for police officers to pull over drivers on our roads. Stopping drivers who've just run a red light imposes a risk to our police officers, to pedestrians, as well as to the drivers. Ensuring that drivers are caught in a safe manner and that every driver is caught who runs a red light, particularly at high-risk intersections, is the best use of our resources.

As Minister of Transportation and Utilities I support Bill 215, the use of red-light camera technology to enhance the safety of our people, and certainly would solicit the support of all my colleagues in this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I do think this is good legislation, and I was actually not going to respond today and just let it go through third reading because I know there are people out there waiting for this piece of legislation to go through so that fines can be established and the action can keep going. But in question period today I heard the Premier say that the Liberals are letting legislation go through too quickly, and I thought: that just won't do, so slow it down. So I do want to speak a bit about this bill.

MR. DUNFORD: I'm sending *Hansard* around this afternoon.

MRS. SOETAERT: I hope *Hansard* is sent around because they'll see how much participation there is by this side of the House and how there is absolutely zippo from the other.

So on the bill, Mr. Speaker. I was actually at the location in Edmonton where the new camera is located. It's a good thing I know that location now. But I was there. [interjection] Thank you. Somebody is paying attention.

MRS. NELSON: Did you go through a red light?

MRS. SOETAERT: No, no, no. We were just testing it out that day. It was research on my part as the transportation critic.

I was at the media event where the police were there and different interested people in the community and the Member for Redwater. It was a very good education. They had lots of media availability, lots of posters, lots of information, lots of TV cameras. Interestingly enough, one TV camera person came up to me and said: what are you doing here? I said: well, I support

this legislation that's going through. She said: well, that's not news. It wasn't news. So I wasn't interviewed, of course, because I actually supported something that this government was doing.

MRS. NELSON: That should have been news.

MRS. SOETAERT: It should have been news that we agreed on something. But as my dear friend Senator Nick Taylor always says: you know, the media only reports the . . .

DR. WEST: Senator?

MRS. SOETAERT: Yeah. My good friend Senator Nick Taylor, who I'm very proud of. He used to comment about your veterinary experience, as I recall, Mr. Minister, but that's an aside.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, please. There is a private member's bill before the House. It does have a serious subject matter. I would imagine that the hon. member has moved it and brought it to this point in time because he does believe very strongly in it. So relevancy is important to the contribution that you've been making this afternoon.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will be relevant because I, too, support this bill, as I have said. The information that I would like to get out to the public is that we do support it, and that is newsworthy, yet that doesn't seem to hit the news. So that's where my train of thought was going, but I can appreciate that I will continue speaking to the bill.

3:10

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Anyway, I have noticed that since that camera's been in place, you kind of keep a sharper eye as to how people are driving through the streets. Certainly in winter conditions I think everybody needs a course in driving after that first snowfall or two, because they are not, I would say, the best of drivers after that first snowfall. A few people, instead of going slower, are zipping through those red lights. So I very much support this bill. It would be really grand if there were a camera at every intersection. It really would be. Imagine what careful drivers we would all become. That would be something that maybe, if funding allowed, would happen.

So I am committed to this. I am pleased to see this bill go through. I think it's very important that it go through before this fall sitting ends. I commend the member for bringing this forward. I think there's been a lot of work done on it, and I do think that the more people know about this the better. Regretfully it was kind of buried in a back section of the paper the next day that it came out, but it was there. So hopefully people see it and are aware of it and the implications of running red lights or zipping through at the last minute.

Mr. Speaker, I do support this bill. I am pleased that it is there, and I hope that if the message gets out, people will drive with greater caution. The fines can be set so that people have a second thought as they zip through, and then innocent people who are part of an accident just because of somebody's careless driving -- maybe that can be prevented.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I do support this bill, and I am glad to see it in third reading.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to make some comments in third reading as chairman of AADAC. While this bill is technically crafted in order to deal with red-light violations, I think the intent of the bill is also to recognize that we have on the road people who do take advantage of the rules of the road and put in harm's way average citizens, pedestrians, and members of the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would share with you that speed and traffic violations, as was spoken to a little earlier by the Minister of Transportation and Utilities, are exacting a terrible toll on our population. In my work as chairman of AADAC touring this province, I can share with you that one of the most serious issues that is raised with me is the tolerance of substance abuse and driving in our communities and the fact that we don't seem to have a way to get that message out that driving while you're impaired, drinking and driving, social drinking and driving, is not appropriate. One of the aspects that this legislation will bring to bear is that there will be some scrutiny of people who have taken the opportunity not only to ignore the laws with respect to alcohol, not only to ignore the laws with respect to speed, but also to not respond to the recognition of what a red light means at an intersection.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical when you figure that most people coming to an intersection with a red light on the opposite side of them can obey that signal, but if you don't wait for a few minutes and make sure the intersection is clear, you're at risk. That causes a slightly different approach to every intersection. Theoretically, when it's green, you go; when it's red, you stop. It challenges the role of pedestrians. It challenges the role of couriers and bicycles and every other aspect of transportation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have a concern as to the violations that the hon. minister spoke to. A considerable number were shown in the reports that came out of Sherwood Park. It's a serious piece of legislation, and I share my colleagues' concern that it gets the notoriety it deserves in order to awaken people's concern around the issue of speeding and driving and traffic violations. So I felt it was my obligation to deal with this in my other capacity, as chairman of AADAC, and to support the member in third reading. I look forward to supporting the vote.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to rise and commend the hon. Member for Redwater for bringing this Bill 215 forward. I did speak to this bill, I believe, in second reading during the spring session, and I'm in full support of it. I think it is timely to bring, unfortunately, the red-light process to the driving skills that are noted in the city of Edmonton and probably all across the province. When you're driving, especially in winter conditions, people have to be conscious that, no, you do not run red lights. I mean, it's worth your life trying to get down here first thing in the morning, especially during rush hour. You see a green light, yet you still have to hesitate. Obviously everybody is colour-blind, because green doesn't really mean green and red doesn't mean red anymore. A lot of the people that are driving the streets nowadays just sort of dismiss the fact that red means stop.

So I applaud the member. It is a very serious piece of legislation. As two members have already pointed out, it's probably not getting the notoriety that it deserves. I'm very pleased to support it, and I hope that the rest of the members in the Leg. will do so as well.

Thank you.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I support the bill, but I have a concern that I'd attempted to raise before at second reading and that I think has not received enough consideration, and it's simply this. I'm perfectly happy to see photoradar employed in terms of fining people who run red lights, but I think the mover misunderstood my comments last time, because when he responded later at the end of that session when I raised my concern, his comment was that the technology is old, that there's nothing very new about it. While I may have put it clumsily or awkwardly and wasn't clear, I'll try one more time.

The only issue I have is that we're too casually, too cavalierly providing for affidavit evidence to come in. In fact, the default mode now becomes affidavit evidence coming in to prove the Crown's case rather than affidavit evidence being used in extraordinary situations. I supported affidavit evidence being used when the Member for Calgary-Cross was sponsoring amendments to deal with, I think, the provincial court offences act or whatever it was. The reason I supported the affidavit evidence there is because the courts in this province have had lots of opportunity to consider the defences in terms of different speed-detection devices.

Contrary to the assertion by the mover of this bill, if he can point out to me a single judicial decision on the effectiveness or the certainty or the accuracy of the photoradar machine used in this adaptation, I'd be interested to hear it, because my sources tell me that there has been no judicial assessment, that there's no body of decisions that sort of address the issues in terms of photoradar apprehending people running red lights.

So it's not a point about how long the technology has existed. The question is whether we have the requisite degree of satisfaction and comfort that the accuracy of these machines has been tested where it can probably best be tested, in the courtroom, where at some point some expert has given some evidence in chief and has been cross-examined and there's some judicial determination. That hasn't happened, hon. member, through the Speaker, to my knowledge. That hasn't happened. That's what's missing.

I'm very concerned that we just sort of in a very casual fashion remove the requirement that the Crown has to prove their case by witnesses giving viva voce, or live or oral, evidence. That's a concern I still have. I think that if we're prepared to do it for this, you know, I expect the next argument is: why wouldn't we use affidavit evidence for all manner of summary conviction offences? Why would we ever need to require a police officer to come to court to give evidence? If we're prepared to say that the threshold is so low that just because it's for ultimately a good purpose, we just sort of sweep away these rights that have been part of our system of law for centuries, then I'm not sure where the safeguards are the next time somebody comes along and says that there's some other mechanical application that is used as evidence to prove somebody has committed an offence.

So I support the thrust of the bill and I support the bill on balance, but I have to register that concern and make it clear that, in my view, this is an extremely dangerous precedent. It's not that the issues will be seen by most people as being perhaps hugely important, but I think this is one of those things that we'll look back on and recognize as a marker, that we've taken affidavit evidence in a criminal or quasi-criminal process a further step down the road, which is far further than it's been used before.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater to close debate.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to see the attention that Bill 215 has had from both sides of the House

and also the support that has been granted towards the bill, and I would certainly encourage everybody to vote for this bill. I think, as I noted earlier in speaking to the bill, it has a lot of merit and is something that's worth while.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to close debate and call the question. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 215 read a third time]

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Second Reading

3:20

Bill 218
Environmental Bill of Rights

[Adjourned debate November 25: Ms Carlson]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise today to speak to Bill 218, the Environmental Bill of Rights, sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. As the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has discussed, this bill proposes a formal framework of public review and input on any legislation, regulation, or instrument which may have an impact on the environment. This is a very broad piece of legislation and one that duplicates many of the protective and efficient measures already established by this government. It also adds a number of cumbersome administrative requirements. For these reasons I cannot advocate that this bill be supported by this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the principle of sustainable development appears to be the foundation of this bill and is a valid argument for protecting our environment. However, much of what the bill aims to do is already being done by this government. As a whole the bill is unacceptable as a piece of legislation because it would work in opposition to the mandate given to this government by its electorate and, as a result, fails to benefit Albertans. We as Members of this Legislative Assembly have a responsibility to respond to what the people of Alberta have said are their priorities and to make them the priorities of this government. The problem with the bill is that it simply does not agree with what Albertans have repeatedly said they want. As elected representatives this is reason enough not to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone in this Assembly exactly what Albertans said they wanted from this government. They wanted fiscal accountability, followed by reinvestment in priority areas such as education, health care, and infrastructure. Keeping this in mind, I would like to address three particular components of the bill that either do not sit well with the mandate given to this government by the people of Alberta or that are already being addressed by the current policy of this government.

The first component I would like to address is the proposal to create the new position of environmental commissioner, appointed by the Auditor General. This position would be one with extremely broad powers to act in matters relating to the environment. This idea is simply inappropriate when viewed in the light of what this government has been working on so diligently to reduce overlap and duplication. Currently there is already a director within the Department of Environmental Protection who handles the approval process for projects that will impact our environment. This streamlined, one-window approach to approval is supported by the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. The director is responsible for co-ordinating and integrating

the review of the potential impacts of proposed projects on the environment. I see no reason to duplicate these efforts.

It appears that much of the job description of this environmental commissioner would be to review and write letters and to insist that the minister play a part in this massive letter-writing and responding campaign. Mr. Speaker, normal communication channels provide adequate consideration and response times for all personal correspondence received by the Alberta government and the departments. In addition, the current approval and enforcement process made available through the Department of Environmental Protection provides a rigorous review of all projects that could impact our environment.

I would like to elaborate on this process briefly, Mr. Speaker, to show how thorough it is in evaluating proposed industrial projects that could cause an adverse effect on the environment. Industrial projects that could impact the environment must apply for an approval from Environmental Protection. Following a detailed review, approval may or may not be issued. When an approval is issued, it contains terms and conditions specific to that project that are needed to protect the environment. This approval process ensures that a project is environmentally acceptable before it can proceed.

Mr. Speaker, the environmental assessment process is the method used to assess the potential effects of proposed projects on the environment. This legislated process is clear and consistent for proponents and for the public. The Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act and accompanying regulations set out in detail what activities require approval as well as the process for obtaining these approvals. Approvals are required from Alberta Environmental Protection to ensure that proposed projects which could adversely impact the environment are reviewed. After a detailed review by the department, a decision is made as to whether an approval will be issued or renewed. This process is very thorough in ensuring that proper measures are taken to protect the environment.

The second issue, Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise regarding the bill is that this is a very broad piece of legislation covering activities that are likely to impact upon the environment. This bill cannot be accepted by this Assembly because it proposes to legislate powers that are so broad and sweeping that it would essentially tie the functioning of this government to a bottom line of sustainable development. I don't think there is anyone here today who would deny the importance of not only sustainable development but also of preserving our environment for future generations. The Alberta government has made a commitment to preserving our natural heritage. Preservation is one of the three pillars of the provincial strategy of this government. However, this legislation would eliminate within this strategy the delicate balance among the three goals of people, prosperity, and preservation.

The reason this province thrives as it does is because of the balance that this government has sought to maintain between these three goals. This balance is what makes the government's strategy so effective, Mr. Speaker. The quality of life of Albertans is dependent upon the achievement of these three goals. Even if we were to consider removing the balance between the three goals in our provincial strategy, I would suggest that the people component of the strategy would be of greater importance to Albertans than the preservation component. Albertans are a priority for this government, and the focus on preservation in the provincial strategy is to maintain a high-quality environment while not unnecessarily reducing the quality of life for all Albertans. People are our first priority. The government's strategy provides for a healthy balance of our goals and objectives, a balance that the people of this province project.

THE SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-East, but the time limit for consideration of this matter has now expired this afternoon.

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

3:30

Women's Shelters

515. Ms Paul moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide more support for women's shelters, for shelter programs, and for spousal violence follow-up teams to ensure that abused women and children are not being turned away from these lifesaving services.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

MS PAUL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to be standing and speaking to a motion that I brought forward, Motion 515, support for women's shelters. I really have given this motion a lot of thought over the last while. It was written last spring when we were in session, and quite a bit had transpired just before this was written in a personal manner that I'm not going to really get into at this time in speaking to the motion. I think it's appropriate that I just say that not only does this motion address the issue of domestic violence in this province -- and hopefully this province can become a leader right across Canada -- but it addresses the personal aspect and the horror that I went through during my domestic violence for 10 months -- or 10 years. I wish it was 10 months, but it was 10 years.

The motion addresses a number of concerns and issues that have been brought to me by women in abusive relationships, by women who have phoned me from right across Canada after my story hit the paper. In fact, I was on national television last week and did mention that this motion will be coming forward, and I think there is some expectation that Alberta will take a leading role. I have the commitment of a national celebrity, so to speak, from the *Dini Petty Show* in Toronto. She shook my hand and said that she would be more than willing to help us promote, speak about, and encourage everybody to talk about domestic violence right across Canada. She also committed to ensuring that fund-raising capacities and organizations will be put in place. For her to make that pledge on national TV was something that is very, very compelling, and it's wonderful for her to do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few opening comments, I did prepare some text that I will address with respect to the motion. I am aware that the motion has been amended. I've been privy to the amendments, and I'm in agreement with the amendments that have been made. They address the basic intent of what I was trying to get across, not only from working in a women's shelter as a crisis intervention counselor but also taking part in the support programs that are available to women in that setting and also the spousal violence team that assisted me through my whole year and are still with me as we speak today.

Mr. Speaker, in the amendment I have to point out that the words "women's shelters" have been changed and "appropriate support" has been put in its place. I'm hoping that that appropriate support will include providing a shelter, perhaps in terms of more financing if it's necessary, bringing a shelter into a town or another city or a community when appropriate. I'm sure that the hon. member across the way will explain the intent.

In the fall of this year the provincial government announced a funding increase of \$1 million to the amount of \$8 million of funding, so now we're up to \$9 million. This level of funding

remains at 1985 levels while the funding for staffing also remains at 1985 levels. In 1985 shelters assisted 7,000 women and children. In 1997 shelters assisted 13,000 women and children, almost double the amount from 1985. These shelters are expected to provide effective services for almost double the people with the same funding.

In a province that boasts about the Alberta advantage, women and children seeking safety from abusive situations are lacking the help they need to ensure survival. We aren't talking about a new car or a nice home. We are talking about basic safety, making sure that they will live to see tomorrow. In 1996 the estimated number of turnaways due to shelters being full was 8,436. The government states that the Department of Family and Social Services assisted 3,941 people. If this is true, then 47 percent of the people turned away are unaccounted for. Where did these people go? Back to an abusive situation, to the streets? This government has offered no explanation.

In fact, in 1997 the government implemented a new reporting system by computer which has no provision for tracking turnaways due to a shelter being full. I can't believe this. Why is that taking place? Can we speculate where the people, where the families, the children that have been turned away are going? We need to know the numbers. According to government numbers, the length of stay of women and children needing help has also increased, thereby causing less people to be accommodated due to lack of space. The government needs to increase the funding to provide essential services, especially more shelters. In Edmonton and Calgary alone over 50 percent of the funds needed to run these shelters and additional programs provided by the shelters come from fund-raising. Does this not sound familiar? I think during our question period today we asked the Minister of Education the same question: fund-raising, fund-raising, fund-raising.

This is clearly another case of downloading on the part of the government, and unfortunately in this area it's on the backs of women and children who are trying to heal. Shelters provide many services that are not covered by the existing funding structure. Examples of these services include outreach and follow-up programs, which I was personally involved in. I became the new beginners follow-up co-ordinator for a women's shelter in Grande Prairie. In order to receive a paycheque every two weeks, we had to fund-raise in order to cover my expenses. Community Development volunteer co-ordination positions and early intervention programs are also having to be funded. These are all essential in order to assist in saving lives and ensuring the safety of abused women and children.

The government claims that addressing family violence concerns remains a priority, yet almost as many women and children were turned away as were provided with service, according to the 1996 numbers. I can't quote you the 1997 numbers, as I mentioned previously, because the numbers are not available. Domestic violence continues to be a social problem in Alberta. In the first six months of 1997 police officers in Edmonton alone responded to over 2,400 family disputes. In October of this year at the Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre 2,058 women were admitted. That's only one month, and that's only one shelter.

In making my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I thought it would be appropriate to inform the House and the members that are here what we can do as either citizens or Members of the Legislative Assembly, because there are a lot of things that you have to be aware of in dealing with the issue of domestic violence. First, know the facts. People are abused in many ways. They are abused verbally, physically, emotionally, and sexually. Everything from calling someone stupid to breaking someone's arm can

be considered an incident of family violence. Victims and their abusers come from every socioeconomic walk of life, from the rich to the poor, professionals and labourers, Christians and non-Christians alike. Statistics say that 1 in 8 women will be beaten by a male partner sometime during her lifetime. That means that 12 percent of women are victimized by men.

3:40

Second, support known victims. If you know a child, a woman, or a man who is being victimized, do what you can to support him or her. Support will most definitely include believing the person and can include calling a professional to intervene if necessary. In conversations with acquaintances, family, and friends, speak out against violence. Like a mold, family violence tends to grow well in the dark, in well-hidden places. Having it out in the open and discussing it is an effort that has the effect of bringing awareness to the issues surrounding the violence.

Finally, if you are being abused yourself, get help by telling someone what is happening to you. If the first person you tell does not and cannot help you, contact the police, the spousal violence team, your doctor, family members, and/or a friend. No one has to live in an abusive relationship, and with the help of all citizens, with all Members of this Legislative Assembly, with all persons across this country, we can extricate abuse from where it lives in families.

Do you know that violence or abuse is not an argument that has gotten out of hand? It is an issue of power and control. Abuse is no longer a private family matter. Aggression and violence are learned behaviours. Abusive individuals can learn nonviolent attitudes and behaviours if they choose to. Between 40 and 60 percent of abusive men witnessed their mothers being hit by their fathers during their childhood. Half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of violence since age 16. Reportedly 1 in 50 seniors suffers from abuse, and 1 in 10 high school students have experienced some form of abuse in their dating relationships.

Drinking and using drugs are not the cause of violence in the family but can be a contributing factor. At some time during their lives 1 in 2 females and 1 in 3 males have been victims of unwanted sexual advances. Sixty-two percent of all women murdered in Canada are victims of domestic violence. Victims are not masochistic and definitely do not enjoy being abused.

Mr. Speaker, I have to make the comment that, as I mentioned, the amendment that is being brought forward has my support, and I will wait for it to be tabled.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I was contacted when my story hit the paper by a woman who lives on Vancouver Island. She was abused for 10 to 15 years. She had to move out of the province she was living in. She deals with her abusive relationship and the healing process by writing poetry. Her mother lives in Hanna, Alberta; she's 82. She read my story in the *Calgary Herald*, mailed it to her daughter, who is under an assumed name. I would like to close by reading one of her poems that she wrote during her healing process. The book is called *Broken Teapots*.

Vigilant

They tell me
I am no longer at war.

How is it that I am no longer at war?
I'm still angry.
I'm still in pain.
I still get afraid.
I'm still grieving.

I still awaken many mornings wondering
 what ways
 he will find next to hurt me.
 I try to remember every day
 That his power over me is really nothing but dust.

Friends tell me don't speak or think of it
 so much and get on with living,
 That I must learn I can live without fear.
 I don't believe
 I've ever known how.

This isn't a long lost skill, this is for me
 an unknown.

I have fought to free myself,
 questioned myself,
 found my way
 in a system they call Justice
 and I call
 Hopelessly in Denial.
 Nothing less than telling me
 he had dropped from the face of this Earth
 could make me feel truly safe.

They tell me
 I am no longer at war.

Show me
 this is truly peace
 and what does a warrior do
 when she is no longer at war?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table some amendments to Motion 515. While the pages are distributing those, I have a few words with regard to the motion.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand today and speak to Motion 515, sponsored by the courageous and honourable Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, violence against women is a pressing issue in our province, as it is across the country and around the globe. In Canada alone it is estimated that 1 in 10 women are abused by their husband or partner. This is an alarming number. It is a painful realization that so many women have to face violence as a part of their daily lives. Statistics such as these are unacceptable, and it is our duty to help these women.

Mr. Speaker, concerns have been raised in the past regarding shelters and their ability to help those in need of their services. Alberta Family and Social Services has come a long way in addressing those needs. Alberta Family and Social Services provides funding to 17 women's shelters, seven rural family violence prevention centres, and two second-stage housing facilities. Approximately 95 percent of the \$8 million budget in 1997-98 was allocated to shelters. In 1997 the women's shelter program, including two federally funded shelters, provided protection for 5,212 women and their 6,232 children. In total, shelters received 71,332 calls for information, referral, or crisis intervention.

The 1998-99 budget for family violence prevention is \$9 million, and about 95 percent of the program's budget is allocated to shelters and other family violence prevention initiatives. In fact, in consultation with specialists knowledgeable in family violence and those administering shelters, \$1

million in new money was allocated to accommodate families in shelters. Mr. Speaker, this is a 12 percent increase from 1997-98, and the department is currently looking to increase this amount by another 11 percent to equal \$10 million in 1999-2000. This funding is targeted towards enabling shelters to continue to provide assistance to more victims.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to note that this government recognizes that simply allocating more money isn't the only answer. We have recognized the need for ensuring that those dollars will be used in the most efficient manner. In the city of Edmonton alone the department covers roughly 60 percent of shelter budgets, with the remaining funds being generated by fund-raising and donations. At this point I would like to applaud those who work at and those who work for WIN House and Lurana Shelter, which many of us are very familiar with.

The office for the prevention of family violence provides a provincial focus for family violence crises and prevention services in Alberta. The office also tracks the use of women's shelter services, distributes prevention and educational materials, and provides training to government staff and the community about the dynamics of family violence. The office also chairs the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence. This committee launched the implementation committee for the Protection against Family Violence Act. This new legislation is expected to be proclaimed in early 1999 and will serve to provide victims of family violence with the help they need. These are only some of the ways this government has worked to help victims of violence.

3:50

The intent behind Motion 515 is commendable indeed. As I said before, it is our duty as representatives of the people of Alberta to work to keep victims of violence out of harm's way. This is especially true in the home, which should be a place of safety and comfort, not a place of violence. Women and children have far too long been victimized by those whom they should be able to trust, and for those reasons I fully support the intent behind this motion, which is ultimately to promote a safer family environment.

However, I have to wonder if this motion goes far enough. Does it account for all victims of violence? Does it reach all of those who need our help? Mr. Speaker, though violence against children is addressed to some degree, I think a focus that should be stressed in this motion is family, and that focus on family includes men.

Mr. Speaker, when we think of men in relation to domestic violence, most will automatically think of them as the abusers and the aggressors, and this is quite often true, but it is certainly not exclusively the case. There has been debate surrounding men and domestic violence. It is argued that violence against men is often an act of self-defence by a woman who has long been abused by that husband or partner. In many cases this is the correct assessment of the scenario.

Another side of the argument says that violence against men is a less serious problem, because violence against women has been supported by societal norms which condone, excuse, and often perpetuate violence against women. Mr. Speaker, this is an indisputable fact. Women who are victims of violence are often as much victims of years of acceptance of abuse by society. However, we cannot deny that men who are victims of domestic violence are also victims of societal pressure. Men who are victims often refuse to recognize it themselves because they consider it a weakness to be battered by a woman.

The focus of many initiatives concerning violence should be on violence within the family, regardless of gender. Programs, initiatives, bills, and motions should reflect the need to help these

people, because they are victims of a terrible crime, whether they are women, children, or men.

I'd like to stress, Mr. Speaker, that I fully support the intent behind Motion 515 and its eagerness to bring support to victims of family violence. However, in light of the comments I've just made, I would like to propose the following amendments to Motion 515. Be it resolved that Motion 515 be amended (a) by striking out "more" and substituting "appropriate"; (b) by striking out "women's shelters, for" and substituting "victims of family violence through"; (c) by striking out "for" immediately before "spousal violence"; and (d) by striking out all the words that follow "to ensure" and substituting "a range of support services is provided for abused women, children, and men." The amended Motion 515 will read as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide appropriate support for victims of family violence through shelter programs and spousal violence follow-up teams to ensure a range of support services is provided for abused women, children, and men.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at the motion as brought forth by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, the amendments I have brought forth serve to clarify some issues of importance. Through these amendments I do not intend to change the intent of this motion. I believe these changes will make a big difference in the motion's ability to bring what is needed to all victims. For example, the funding provided may be more, but is it enough and is it directed in the right areas? For the support given to shelters to be effective, it must be appropriate for the circumstances of clientele, geographic location, and respective community programs and responses.

Replacing "women's shelters" and substituting "victims of family violence" does not change the intent behind the motion, which is to provide help to victims of violence. However, what the amendment does is set the focus on the victims who may largely be women but who are also children and men. In this way we include the concept of the family, as all members may be victims of these horrible crimes.

Mr. Speaker, therefore we suggest to insert "a range of support services is provided for abused women, children, and men." Again, this amendment is a small one but includes anyone who feels they may be a victim and ensures that a variety of services is available for them to get all the help they need to remove themselves from the abuse and continue on with their very precious lives.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 515 brings to light a very grave problem in our society that cannot be neglected by legislators. I commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this issue to light, however painful it has been. I believe the amendments to Motion 515 that I proposed do not detract from the original intentions of that hon. member but only enhance it and bring more victims into a place where they can hope to get the help they both need and deserve.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to vote in favour of Motion 515 with the amendments I have proposed. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have some concerns about the amendment, because there's no doubt that no matter how many shelters we have, there's still one pie that it's all divided into and "appropriate" can be changed any

way that a certain minister may deem fit. I'm disappointed in that. However, I have spoken with the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, and we can live with this amendment for a couple of reasons, because the whole point of this is to bring awareness. November is domestic violence awareness month, and this motion helps to do that. So even though I'm not totally thrilled with the amendment, we'll live with it, because it's important that this be debated in here and discussed with a certain level of maturity.

There are no jokes to tell, and there are no funny stories about violence. We have a problem in our society and one that we must deal with. If we're to do our part, then part of it is speaking to this motion. I commend the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this forward. It's a brave move on her part, and I'm proud of that.

I've been to many shelters across this province, and I've seen dedicated staff and positive people, and I just admire that they can continue to work at this. It's heartbreaking work. It's very difficult work, and on top of all this difficult work add to that fund-raising every other night. Certainly if we're talking about stats and how many people have used the shelters and those who have been turned away, there's obviously a need for more funding. So I would assume that by "appropriate" we mean "more."

I want the stats on '97, and I don't know why we don't have them, unless this government is trying to hide some pretty bad stats. I challenge the hon. members on the other side to make sure those are public information, the stats about the women and children and maybe men who've been turned away. I challenge that information to be brought here, because it's interesting we can't get those stats past 1996.

4:00

You know, a while ago I was in a small rural community, only about 800 people, and this person who works at a shelter was telling me that she was at a social function, and people were talking and they were saying: well, we've always supported that shelter in that big city, but nobody here ever uses it. That woman couldn't say anything because of her professionalism, but she knew -- she knew -- that there were women and children in that community who had used that shelter, yet that community denied that reality. So I think we have to acknowledge this problem, and I think we're getting there. Twenty years ago -- and I think everyone here can remember 20 years ago.

DR. MASSEY: Some better than others.

MRS. SOETAERT: Some better than others. Twenty years ago we actually acknowledged that there was a need for women's shelters, and the government and church groups, organizations got behind the shelters and got them going. I think that was a major step to openly admitting that we had a problem and that we needed to address it, that women and children needed help. Regretfully, now so much of their focus is on fund-raising.

I would like to see -- and I'm hoping this amendment addresses it -- follow-up teams to ensure a range of support services. I've talked to most of the shelters, and they may have enough money to run the physical operating of the building but certainly not enough for outreach programs, and that's a pity. That's where you get it right, in people's homes. That's where people learn skills to go on. I know that in my communities many of those turning points programs are very much supported by the community, but they are constantly fund-raising.

I think we have to talk in here about: how do we address domestic violence? This motion is part of us, and I think each one

of us -- we're in the public eye a great deal -- has to watch for signs of abuse. Do you know a child who never wants to go home? Is that child's mom never at a social function in your community? Does her child miss a great deal of school? Does her partner make fun of her in public or run her down, and does she never have enough money to do anything? Does she wear lots of heavy makeup and clothing that may cover any possible physical injuries? Is she extremely nervous around loud noises? Is she extremely fearful when something is dropped? I think we all have to be on the lookout for those signs so we can reach out to those who need us.

Violence against another person is about inequality, one individual dominating another. You know, men and women alike are guilty of laughing at women-hating jokes and racial slurs, and I think we as leaders in the community should definitely speak out against those kinds of jokes and comments. I think we have to stop believing in stereotypes, and we have to inform ourselves on the current realities of life for aboriginal and Inuit peoples. I think we as a society suffer. When one family suffers from domestic violence, we all suffer.

I know we are all working to make Alberta a safer place. You know, if you were a woman in a violent situation right now and you were on a game show and you had two doors to look behind, what would those two doors be? Behind the first door we have a home in a community. You and your children like the community, but your partner beats you once in a while, not all the time but once in a while. He does take care of the kids once in a while, so you can kind of survive that. Behind the second door you have a chance to get away from the abuse, but you will have no money. Often you must leave your community and start over again. You'll have a social worker to help you at bit. She'll be able to support you a bit, but that help is limited. Not much of a choice.

Well, I believe there has to be a third door, a door that says the law will protect you, that you have the choice of staying in your own home with protection or leaving to gain anonymity in a safe place, a door that says we will help you gain the self-esteem you need to be successful, a door that offers outreach to help you and your children and your partner. That's the third door I want to see. I do believe we're working towards that in legislation. I want to see it proclaimed. I also believe that this motion helps bring this issue to the floor yet again so that we can make the public aware that this cannot be something that continues in our society.

Everyone here has a moral and socioeconomic responsibility to create a society that has zero tolerance for violence. Domestic violence transcends all classes. It is devastating, it brings great personal pain and humiliation to the victim, and it is systemic. We need more than law alone. We need a wide spectrum of support from education, churches, health, social services, funding, and we definitely need everyone in this Chamber.

We cannot tolerate the moral and financial burden that domestic violence imposes upon us. I long for the day when zero tolerance for violence is echoed everywhere, when children know instinctively that violence is never acceptable. I think it is incumbent upon each one of us to support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

MRS. BURGNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak in favour of the motion and speak in favour of the amendments to the motion. I feel it's incumbent upon me as chair of the implementation strategy for the legislation on family violence to take the opportunity to assure this House and this member that the motion that has been tabled and the amendments which are being spoken to are indeed a priority of government. For those of you who

have been following how this issue has developed following the proclamation last spring, as you're aware, the commitment was made to deal with the implementation of the bill across the province with a high priority from government. May I say that the responsibility to deal with implementation had as much to do with education and awareness, which speaks to the very heart of the issue and the need for this motion to be before the House this afternoon, than just the simple issue of resources and specific resources, i.e. shelters.

I should let you know that the implementation strategy includes components of training and education. In that regard, there is a video that has been prepared that has been shared with the policing community as part of their Justice training session that occurred over three days earlier this fall. I might add that in addition to the RCMP detachments throughout the province, the major urban domestic violence units and the aboriginal policing community participated in that.

I can tell you that the aboriginal community has taken a specific interest in this because they have unique aspects to the violent situations in their communities, which are different from urban and rural scenarios and require specific attention and, in fact, in many cases specific bylaws for their own communities. The Métis have taken a serious interest in this as well, and the director of the office for the prevention of family violence, Jane Holliday, has taken it upon herself to meet with many of those aboriginal leaders.

Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate not to note the role of the court that is required. It is not just a question of bringing legislation forward. The cycle of violence is understood by those who are victims only after they have been immersed in it and are receiving some support. There is a whole education process for our courts, our lawyers, our judges. I've spoken to the Calgary chapter of the Canadian Bar Association. The legal profession has been involved in reviewing the regulations. Every one of those initiatives educates and makes people aware of the issues that are before us. In addition to that, the clarification of the protection orders has been vetted, and that is in the community process at the moment.

4:10

I think I shared with many of you that the communities themselves, under our education and awareness program, are meeting throughout the fall and into the spring, and it's not a delay strategy to prolong the proclamation. It's an education component. We have asked those communities, after viewing the material, after seeing the legislation in its final form, if they would identify amongst themselves where the gaps in services are. Those gaps, Mr. Speaker, may be shelter spaces. Those gaps more than likely are also transitional housing. Those gaps may be education. Those gaps may simply be cultural issues and some of the diversity issues. We are working with our strategy in the seniors' community. We have worked with a proposal to deal with multicultural issues, to look at translating the materials into six or seven key languages where we know that domestic violence is a problem within that community. Every one of those issues has been supported by the government. Resources are provided by the government, and they are in addition to whatever shelter aspects may come out as this issue comes forward.

Mr. Speaker, we also could just speak for a minute about the AUMA, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. In their resolutions before the floor a few weeks ago here they also identified this issue. We know that a number of bodies, whether they're school boards or municipalities or rural/urban districts or health authorities, have taken it upon themselves to be familiar with and identify the concerns and co-ordinate that.

The children's services initiative. We have a unique language in our legislation supporting the situation with young families and young children, and we work in partnership with the prostitution legislation for young people who are horrifically abused in those situations.

AADAC is a member of that implementation strategy, because treatment is necessary, not just the treatment for the psychological and physical abuse that families have been involved with but often the substance abuse that goes along with it.

I want to take a few minutes and speak a little bit about the men's issues that are there. We have shelter programs for men. It is recognized as a serious component.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Where?

MRS. BURGNER: In Calgary. Sheriff King Home, my hon. colleague.

I would also say that one of the issues around the abuse for men has to do with the education and awareness of what their abuse looks like, how they can be reconciled to appropriate support for treatment and training. Some of those resources are not there. The legislation that was approved by this House has the capacity to speak to the victim in the situation, be they male, female, older, or younger. So, Mr. Speaker, it's a very comprehensive piece of legislation and recognizes the needs of the community to respect the fact that there is no gender bias in this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just mention that as recently as a week ago I spoke at the FCSS conference, at one of the workshops, in order to educate those members of the community who deal definitely and specifically with family violence issues and in fact in part of my presentation encouraged those members who work on that issue in their communities, be they elected officials or bureaucrats, to make sure that their community knows the role that shelters, crisis lines, help lines, education material provide in this area.

We can't at all forget the evaluation component to this legislation. The issue about statistics was made a few minutes ago. I am not at all satisfied that at the end of the day we can count heads or count bodies or count access. What we're looking at is an evaluation model that's based on statistics so that we understand where the situation is, who needs help, what kind of help they're getting. But more important than that, Mr. Speaker, we also want to know where the legislation is working or is not working. If there is a resource or a community that has not got the support it needs, we want to be able to tap into that. So a fair amount of time has been put into evaluation.

We also want the evaluation issue to be dealing with ongoing policy so that, for instance, if we highlight an area where through cultural issues there is a shortfall in support, we can ensure that our policies are in place or the education component is in place. So the evaluation is an ongoing element not only on a statistical basis to provide resources but also to assist in effective policy.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, and the amendments have expanded the substance of the motion to incorporate that it is families who are involved in this: men, women, and children. We've heard some information about the number of women who are involved. I take nothing away from the tragic circumstances that many, many women and their children deal with. But it's absolutely important that we recognize that at the heart of this issue is the stability and the safety of our families and the children's initiatives. Some of our specific health-related programs that we're dealing with in the community, our mental health programs, education, training -- all of these are provided in a

core basis to look at addressing support for families, and hopefully through such things as education, self-esteem development, respect for children, respect for authority, and a better understanding in their community we will be able to eliminate, as the goal was mentioned earlier by one of my colleagues, the need for specific protection in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have spoken to all of the issues that I felt were important. In conclusion, may I just simply say that the amendments that have been brought forward and this motion that is in front of us talk about support in terms of shelter. It's specifically mentioned in the original motion. It's very important to me that in this whole process every element of public awareness will actually evoke and call people to get support and help before they're in crisis, before a shelter is the only option. The education around your neighbourhood and your community that you are at risk, that your situation is intolerable -- somehow we have to get people motivated to know that there's support out there and to seek it.

Mr. Speaker, we can never lose sight of the threat and the risk of these women and families. Therefore, please remember that the safety of those victims is most important. Staying in the home may or may not be always the best option, and seeking anonymity and shelter may or may not be always the best answer. We mustn't narrow our thinking on what this motion is supporting.

I want to commend the member who's brought it forward. I support the amendments that were brought forward, and I hope my contribution has helped us understand that there is strong support in this government for this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Motion 515. I want to thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs for helping us break the silence here and outside this House on the issue of family violence, on the issue of violence against women and children.

The point has been made I think by my hon. colleagues that the incidence of family violence is not limited to the poor, to a particular religious community, ethnic community, occupational group, or a resident of a certain region or area. It's universal; it's widespread. It's not only universal and widespread; it's also historically grounded. There has been violence for a very long time, for ages, mostly perpetrated against women, female spouses in the family household. We are now beginning to talk openly as an educated, informed society about the problem, looking at its causes, looking at how to prevent it before family violence takes place, and how to provide support to the victims of violence.

4:20

I must go on record here, Mr. Speaker, to note that I come from a family where a member of my family, my sister, became a murder victim in 1986. So I speak here as one who has looked at the problem of this violence from the side of the victims.

But I'm also a male. I speak here also as a male who recognizes that the gravity of spousal violence has to be understood, in particular by males. We must own up to the responsibility for the incidence of violence that takes place in the family setting, primarily against females at the hands of males. So I speak here as a male who acknowledges that particular facet of the problem.

Mr. Speaker, family is the most essential and the very first site where all of us learn to be human beings, where every child encounters the adult world. Family therefore is exceedingly

important as a focus for our attempts if we want to prevent violence, if we want to provide help for children who witness violence when they're young, to provide them with help to learn to reject violence as something that is normal in resolving family disputes, differences, and the like.

In terms of prevention, the motion is extremely well intended because it deals with the victims first and foremost, and that's where I think we need to start. I fully agree that we need more support. My hon. colleague from St. Albert has amended the motion to make it read "appropriate support." I hope that by "appropriate" my colleague from St. Albert means that support should be both adequate and appropriate. Inadequacy of resources makes it impossible to provide appropriate support. The connection between the adequacy and the appropriateness, therefore, is an organic one, and it must be understood.

She was very kind to recognize and acknowledge that since 1985 there has been no increase in the budget for women's shelters. She also acknowledged that 95 percent of that budget goes to provide financial support for the shelters. That means there's only 5 percent left for preventive activities, whether these preventive activities are geared to the family level or the community level or wherever else. So I think it's important to acknowledge that resources are inadequate at this moment.

Inflation since 1985 -- I can't give you the exact figure. I'm sure it's more than 100 percent, so the real value of \$8 million today is perhaps \$4 million or less, so we have very, very reduced resources and a growing problem. So it's not just a matter of finding out how we can use the dollar more efficiently.

Of course, all of us would say that the dollar must be used most efficiently, that we must be most efficient in providing our services. There's no disagreement on that, but if we go past that, then we have to ask the question of adequacy. Is there enough there? My fear is that there is not, and I hope that the hon. Member for St. Albert acknowledges the problem of inadequacy, insufficiency of funds for dealing with the problem.

Mr. Speaker, in order to provide the services to either the victims or to families who need education in order to prevent the incidence of violence in the first place or to diffuse potential violent contacts and situations at the family level, we obviously need trained, professional, well-educated social workers who are also well paid. In 1985 a social worker with a university degree working in a shelter made about \$8.60. In 1998 the rate remains more or less the same. I stand to be corrected if I am misinformed about that. But to keep the funding so low as to . . .

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, but under Standing Order 8(4) I must put all questions to conclude debate on the motion under consideration.

[Motion on amendment carried]

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the motion as amended proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, all those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those opposed, please say no.
The motion has been carried unanimously.

MR. RENNEN: Mr. Speaker, I am rising to seek unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Orders, in light of the fact that there are only about three minutes left in the allotted time for

private members' business, and that we now move on to government business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. May we have unanimous consent for the motion as moved by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? We have unanimous consent.

head: Government Bills and Orders
head: Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 49

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1998 (No. 3)

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any comments or amendments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

MS BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I spoke on this earlier, and I'm now concerned that some of the information I was given was at the very least unclear.

The money that is going to this new lab. I wonder if either the Economic Development or the Community Development minister can answer. We did talk about this a couple of days ago, but I believe that the minister's comments weren't recorded. We were doing it quite casually. What I'm concerned about is the money for this construction and development of this new lab in Calgary. Is that the total cost? What I have subsequently found out is that MDS Kasper, a private, for-profit laboratory, appears through CLS to have a monopoly relationship with the Calgary regional health authority in terms of provision of lab services. What I want to make sure is that the taxpayers aren't picking up the tab of a private, for-profit facility. Now, I am aware that the CRHA has declared that it's in partnership with the monopoly, as far as I'm concerned. So what I want to know is if MDS Kasper are contributing their share. In other words, are they matching these dollars?

4:30

I would like to point out that we have attempted to get the audited financial statements of MDS Kasper and have been wholly unsuccessful in our several attempts to do so. My concern subsequently is that taxpayers' dollars would be going into a private, for-profit company that, as I say, appears to have a monopoly on lab services in the city of Calgary yet do not wish to be financially accountable to the very taxpayers whose money they are pocketing day after day with every single test that's done.

I think that's my primary objection, and it may not be an objection if the information that I receive from either minister is, in my opinion, appropriate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MRS. NELSON: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In answer to the hon. member's question, this is in fact a partnership, and there will be funds coming from the Calgary regional health authority

to pay for the balance of the lab. It is a partnership. I'll refer you to *Hansard* of November 26, page 2153. In my opening comments for the lottery fund estimates I did clarify the breakdown of the two funding: \$9 million would be coming from the lottery funds for that, and the total of \$16 million, which would be done for the construction of the facility.

By doing that, Mr. Chairman, what happens for the people under the Calgary regional health authority is that it ends up being a savings overall because they're merging into one facility as opposed to a number of leased facilities. So there's a saving of almost \$2 million due to the reduced costs from not having a number of facilities leased and the cost of running them and the cost of data gathering in a number of facilities. So it's for the benefit, really, of all the community, and it is under contract with the Calgary regional health authority.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MS BARRETT: Thank you. I just need one more thing clarified by the hon. minister. One minister was saying just a moment ago that it will be publicly owned. I need clarification that this facility will be publicly owned and that MDS Kasper has no ownership in this facility, either that or clarification as to whether or not MDS Kasper is putting money into the construction of this facility. Presumably, if they're in a partnership, it would be on a 50-50 basis.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MRS. NELSON: Could I get back to the hon. member with clarification on that, Mr. Chairman?

MS BARRETT: Certainly.

MRS. NELSON: I'll do that.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make a few comments, if I may, about Bill 49, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 1998 (No. 3). The appropriation act is about more than money. I think it's a lot about and says a lot about government and government planning.

One of the first questions that comes to mind, of course, when there is a request for moneys that weren't originally allocated in the budget is: where did the planning that was undertaken at that time fail? The government has devoted a great deal of time, effort, and energy in promoting and fostering planning by departments, municipalities, school boards, and government agencies across the province. I think they take great pride in the institution of three-year business plans and advocating careful planning on the part of all of those who would spend public money. I think that effort is one that most people would applaud, but when there is a request such as the one before the Assembly now, it does make you wonder what happened to the planning process or if anything actually did happen to the planning process that could have avoided this kind of a request coming to the Assembly and not having it considered as part of the government's regular budget process. I guess the question it does raise is: what does the government know now that it didn't know last budget time that would lead to these requests?

I recall when visiting the municipalities conference a year ago and two years ago that the coming crunch in terms of infrastructure plans and funding was one that was made abundantly clear to those of us who went to listen. Municipalities were saying at that

time that roads and services were going to have to be cut. I know that as long as two years ago in the municipality with which I'm associated, services like garbage collection for rural constituents were discontinued because the municipality lacked the needed funds. The municipalities have been telling us for a long time that they were underfunded. Certainly there may have been additional pressure because of increased growth, people coming into the province, but that, I think, only added to the problem that we already knew the municipalities had. I think we knew that at budget time, and it could have been accommodated at that time.

The health care funding. We have known for a long time that the kind of planning needed for health care has not been in place and that really what has happened is that the system is being funded on an ad hoc basis. I think it's claimed that these are pressure points that are responded to, but the fact of the matter is that there is no long-term planning. There is not the kind of systematic planning that allows regional health authorities and those involved in the system to make plans for the unexpected, let alone plans for the day-to-day operations, and to fund those plans at a level that is adequate.

I guess the one glaring request is the money needed for the north/south corridor. I can't believe that project can be treated as an emergent project by the government. That has been a project that has been contained in previous budgets, and I just can't quite understand why it would appear in front of us in the appropriation act, as it does now.

There's contingency money built into the budget. I was looking at the remarks from the Member for Lethbridge-East, and I think the member made the point that budgets are built with contingency funds. Surely those contingency funds would cover the costs, for instance, of the legal claims that the Family and Social Services department knew were going to be a coming liability. Again it raises questions about the kind of planning that has gone on and results in the request that the Assembly has before it today.

4:40

I read with interest the Provincial Treasurer's responses to criticisms about the lack of planning in the budget. I think he dismisses the request as being only about 2 and a half percent of the \$14 billion budget. He chose to use a legal metaphor in a rather facetious way to make himself, I guess, or make the government and these requests look good. He uses that legal metaphor by talking about being guilty. I think he used "guilty" a number of times in his address the previous evening and words like "accused" and used those words to try to indicate that really this was a good thing that the government was doing and that if they were guilty, they were only guilty of doing good work.

I think he could have also chosen some other metaphors to describe the action of the government. He could have chosen some metaphors from transportation. In that case we might have looked at a government that had lost the road map and didn't know what the destination was and didn't know how much it was going to cost to travel to the destination and had to keep writing home for more money. He could have chosen a medical metaphor, and then this appropriation act could have been seen as an excrescent to the budget, if you would, a disfiguring outgrowth of the budget.

So while the Provincial Treasurer chose metaphors that would make government action in this request look good, I think there are metaphors that could interpret the same action, the same phenomenon quite differently and probably more appropriately than the Provincial Treasurer has done.

I think we go back to the basic question, and it is one of planning. Certainly none of us expect the government or any

other agency to plan always for the unexpected. They can plan to a certain extent by the use of their contingency funds, and that's been done in the past. Requests such as this have become more and more frequent, and this has just added to the list of the supplementary requests for funds, which have become sort of a habit in terms of their appearance before the Assembly.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I'd conclude my remarks. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I would like to say a few words this afternoon on Bill 49. I always watch with interest, and particularly I read the business plans of this government, of each and every department. Some ministers are more proud of their business plans than others, it's apparent to me. But the business plan has become the guideline, and it's a step from one year to the next.

Here we have before us close to \$600 million: \$580 million dollars in supplementary supply. I don't understand the difference between supplementary supply in this case and special warrants. This is a lot of money, Mr. Chairman. It indicates to me that something is wrong, that our planning is off, that our business plans are not working. We can look at the major areas where additional spending is being requested. Of course, health care is going to receive \$225 million. Every member of this House knows that there was a lot of funding removed from the health care system. We would all hear the stories that it was necessary, that the system will be fine and everything will be normal, that the severely normal Albertans will have access to health care. This did not happen.

This \$225 million is a recognition that the health care cuts were too deep and too fast and in a lot of situations without proper, adequate thought. So suddenly we're near the end of this term, this legislative session, and we need these supplementary supplies, not special warrants. Supplementary supplies, they're called.

Now, this latest installment of supplementary supplies. Well, to put it mildly, there is not adequate mention of each government department. I know there are only five here, but it's a lack of planning. Even when we consider the volatility on the international markets of not only oil but natural gas and what they mean to the prosperity of Albertans, this is unacceptable. Minister after minister will talk about their business plans, their fine plans for the future, which obviously are not working.

I have serious concerns about this lack of planning in the government's budgeting process. We have to come back to supplementary supply time after time. This is, I believe, the third set of supplementary estimates in the past 10 months. The Legislative Assembly in this period has been asked to appropriate an additional \$1.5 billion -- \$1.5 billion -- and that is a great deal of money.

Now, I don't think we can support this latest installment of supplementary estimates without some explanation as to how this new spending will contribute to meeting the defined outcomes and performance criteria, such as reducing health care waiting lists, opening up hospital beds. There was a good start made -- and hon. members across the way recognize this -- with the re-establishment of the Grey Nuns hospital in the southeast section of Edmonton. This was a good start. But where was the planning? We knew last year whenever we were talking about red alerts and an ambulance going from one hospital to the next and the driver very concerned about getting caught in rush-hour traffic. We knew all this then, and that is the time that there should have been adequate funding put into the system. Here we are now: a dollar here, a million dollars here, a million dollars

over there. This is only adding to the confusion that all Albertans feel towards this government and its delivery of health care, Mr. Chairman.

Now, we have had, as I said before, four supplementary supply bills during the last 19 months. During the last 19 months, if we go from three to four supplementary supply bills, the amount increases from \$1.1 billion to \$1.4 billion. I would have to contrast this with the previous Treasurer. The previous Treasurer, I understand, had a little over \$600 million during his four-year tenure as Provincial Treasurer. It is clear to me that with the \$1.5 billion in unbudgeted spending in 1998 alone this government -- and I'm repeating this again -- needs better budget management systems. For instance, the \$128 million in funding for our regional health authorities to address cost pressures and cost drivers in health care would be linked to specific outcomes if this government, as I said before, had an actual plan for the delivery of the publicly administered health care system.

Now, the Auditor General is always making very, very sound recommendations. He's made some very sound recommendations for the Department of Labour regarding the three-year business plans and how they should work. He has suggested that the Department of Labour look very, very carefully at the delegated administrative organizations. But here in his 1997-1998 annual report the Auditor General makes a series of recommendations about deficiencies in health care planning. For example, the Auditor General notes that the business plans and the budgets of the 13 regional health authorities were not finalized and approved by the Minister of Health until August of this year, even though almost half the business year was over.

4:50

Now, I can only say that in that \$1.1 billion that has come in the last 10 months there was no allocation for mistakes that were made in the promotion of shoddy building materials, untreated pine shakes, in the Alberta Building Code. I can only imagine, whenever this happens, what the supplementary budget will be then, because eventually the Alberta Building Code will have to accept responsibility for the active promotion of this shoddy, untreated product. Many, many homeowners are getting more and more frustrated with the government, because eventually what will happen -- if we've had \$1.1 billion in the last 10 months in supplementary supply, then this will be . . .

MR. SMITH: Point of order.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Labour is rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

MR. SMITH: Mr. Chairman, citation: *Beauchesne* 459, relevance. Rarely is the member relevant to the proceedings in the House, but in this case he's certainly off the topic of Bill 49.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the point of order, first of all.

MR. MacDONALD: Mr. Chairman, 459. I believe that I was discussing the supplementary estimates. I was discussing the fact that there was \$1.1 billion spent in the last 10 months, and we have to be very careful because in the future I can imagine that this is where the funding will come for untreated pine shakes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Within the bill itself, hon. member, we've got

Economic Development, Family and Social Services, Health, Justice, Municipal Affairs, and Transportation and Utilities. Which section do pine shakes fall under?

MR. MacDONALD: Economic Development.

THE CHAIRMAN: If that's the feeling of the hon. member and no one is arguing to the contrary, then . . .

The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MRS. NELSON: Well, Mr. Chairman, clearly if the hon. member would focus on the presentation that was made last Thursday, in the presentation what was deemed under Economic Development is really what the lottery funds are being utilized for. There were specific targets there, and we clearly laid them out. If he would like to review *Hansard*, my opening comments from last Thursday, I'm sure that it will save you a lot of time looking for things that are not dealt with in this appropriation bill. So I would ask the hon. member to focus on the opening comments and realize what was involved in the elements there. The topic that he has raised was not part of that dialogue, and it is not what the House is being asked to deal with today. They are being asked to deal with specific funds: \$130 million for infrastructure, \$9 million for the Calgary lab services, and \$10 million to go to Municipal Affairs for the capital region area.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, it would appear that the Minister of Economic Development is saying that the pine shakes issue is not within her department. So only if you are advocating that it should be would it be in some way relevant. In the discussion that you've had so far it would appear that you have strayed a little bit. So if you could get back on the sections contained within the bill, that would be helpful.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will talk about financial management. I will talk about fiscal responsibility. I will talk about responsibility to taxpayers, and I shall continue.

Thank you.

Debate Continued

MR. MacDONALD: This is a government, Mr. Chairman, that foolishly believes that they can use prior period adjustments for personal income taxes, more slot machines, liquor taxes, and user fees to balance this budget on a year-to-year basis. Where is this plan? There's \$580 million. There are 580 million reasons why we have a poor three-year business plan. If we eliminated the \$340 million in prior period adjustments for PIT, the \$60 million in extra user fees, the \$180 million in extra revenue from 2,500 new slot machines, we would be staring at a budget shortfall today, and this government would be back in the mode of making unplanned cuts to programs. I assume that would also mean various individual government departments, where we've seen full-time employees just cut. We know the services that Albertans are expecting for this, and they're not getting it. We look at many, many, many different departments, but the planning does not exist. Good long-term planning is absent, and we can explain this through these supplementary estimates.

This government has generated over \$7 billion in cumulative surpluses over the past four years and is 10 years ahead of the net debt targets established in the Balanced Budget and Debt Retirement Act yet is light-years away from dealing with the volatility of the nature of a resource-based economy.

Mr. Chairman, here's what the government's own revenue forecasting of July 1996 had to say: the size of the revenue

cushions is not large in relation to the province's total revenues and the variability in nonrenewable resources and corporate tax revenues; consideration should be given to alternatives which provide greater flexibility in covering large, unforeseeable, and negative short-term relative shocks while maintaining the laudable goal of keeping expenditures in line with sustainable revenues.

Now, further to that, Mr. Chairman, we have to consider where we're going in this province and what this signifies to us: Bill 49, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act. We seem to think that money is growing on trees, and leap we go, and there's absolutely no planning, none whatsoever. This is unacceptable. It is unacceptable for a number of reasons, but I will allow my hon. colleagues a chance to express their views on this \$580 million supplementary supply.

With that, I am willing to cede the floor to one of my colleagues. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have had the opportunity to speak to the supplementary estimates earlier but I don't think to Bill 49 specifically, so I'm looking forward to this. I think it's time that this government truly starts to plan. Every year they put out this big budget that says: we're going to pay down the debt this much; we're going to spend this much money here and this much money there. Then the public thinks: oh yea; aren't they wonderful? Then what they do is sneak in a few little supplementary estimates at the end of the year.

Who out in the public knows what kind of poor budgeting this government does? It's incumbent upon us as opposition to inform people about what a bungler this government is at budgeting. For example -- and I figured it out in the estimates because the minister was explaining it to me -- it goes through Treasury Board. Who's the biggest lobbyist? That's how I see it. The biggest lobbyist wins the prize.

5:00

MR. MacDONALD: The Health minister? Certainly not the Minister of Labour.

MRS. SOETAERT: The Minister of Labour. No, no. He doesn't win the prize. Who's responsible for women's shelters? Who's that under? Community Development?

AN HON. MEMBER: Social services.

MRS. SOETAERT: Yeah. Social services. That didn't win the prize. Where was the lobbying for that to go through Treasury Board so that the slush fund could pay for it in supplementary estimates? I have now figured out how this government budgets: who can lobby the loudest. So I'm going to talk to the minister of . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: The Deputy Government House Leader rising on a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MR. HANCOCK: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I believe it is 23(1). There is no such thing as a slush fund. To suggest slush fund draws this House into disrepute, and the hon. member should be cautioned to use her language well in this House and not bring this House and all members of this House into disrepute by

talking about slush funds.

MRS. SOETAERT: On the point of order, I bet, Mr. Chairman, that the minister cannot explain the difference between a contingency budget and a slush fund. I mean, it's a nickname. It's quite accepted in this province that lottery dollars are there for the grab, and people have nicknamed it a slush fund. Long before my time in this Legislature people knew that this government used lottery dollars as a slush fund to spend where: oh, we got a little problem here. So I am only reiterating what people have said to me in my community.

THE CHAIRMAN: We are on a point of order, hon. member. It would seem that there is a significant difference in parliamentary terms between slush fund and contingency. Contingency is a governmental one. Now, you may argue that there are some similarities, but what I think the hon. member was referring to was 23(1): ". . . introduces any matter in debate which offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly." So if you could contain your remarks to live up to parliamentary practice that would be helpful.

MRS. SOETAERT: I'll contain my enthusiasm, Mr. Chairman, because I would never want to deliberately offend the minister of intergovernmental affairs.

DR. MASSEY: He's sensitive.

MRS. SOETAERT: He's very sensitive, and I wouldn't want to offend him. We'll call it fun money. No, I won't. I won't. I won't. Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Deputy Government House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, we're talking about providing services to Albertans with taxpayers' money, and for this hon. member to take Bill 49 and talk about fun money, I take exception. I think that if you want to be serious about the debate, you should actually stick to the bill instead of going off and trying to make political statements because, quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, a little earlier the previous member said something about us spending money. The only people I've heard whining about spending money is that side of the House.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, you rose on a point of order. The point of order is either one of two things. I thought at first that is was going to be 23(1), which your colleague had just referred to, but then you were also talking about relevance. So if we take the first one first . . .

MRS. NELSON: All of the above would be fine, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: If we take the first one first, then I think that the hon. member has already been reminded: a rose by any other name. So if we could ask the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to address her comments to the estimates that are contained in Bill 49 and not offend those who are wanting parliamentary words in here.

MRS. SOETAERT: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. I would never,

never deliberately offend anyone, and I do thank you for that compliment of calling me a rose. Was that it? Maybe it wasn't. He's a little worried now.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: However, back to Bill 49 and how these supplementary supplies go through and how they are applied within the budget. I was saying, Mr. Chairman, that this is a poor process for budgeting. Now, I can understand a couple of dollars out. I can. I can understand a forest fire and needing emergency funding. I can understand pine shakes and needing immediate funding. But we are truly out half a billion dollars. Now, if you were budgeting for your family and you said, "Well, we're just out \$50,000 in this year's budget, but we'll just go to this lottery board in the sky and get it replaced," I don't think anybody could survive with that kind of household budgeting, ever. But somehow this government does that, and I would venture to say that that's not good enough.

I'm glad of some of these expenditures, and I've said that. Certainly in transportation. We said earlier in the year, where are you going to make -- you talked about the north/south trade corridor. You didn't put it in the original budget, so now we come here and we have to spend time talking about that. The big announcement is: we're going to balance the books; we're going to be ahead of the dollar; we're going to save money. But in reality we're just sneaking in supplementary estimates at the end of the month.

I don't think people in Alberta understand the true picture of how this government budgets, and that is why I am glad to speak to this bill. I have real concerns and I didn't get to ask specifically about the question of public dollars going to a private facility in health care, if I understand that correctly. I'd like that explained to me. I'm trying to find the exact spot.

Part of this is practitioner services, Ministry of Health, \$30 million for provision of estimated cost of Alberta's share for hepatitis victims. We saw that coming. That should have been planned for earlier. I mean, I'm glad it's there, but I just can't believe the inability of this government to foresee this earlier in the year when all these hepatitis C victims were in the paper. They were talked about. That certainly should have been something that was accounted for.

The \$130 million requested by the ministry of transportation to fund municipal infrastructure. I would venture to say that right at the beginning of the year that was poorly planned, and I do believe that the municipalities have carried the brunt of this government's flag waving that they're so wonderful. Now the government talks about reducing personal taxes. However, how many municipalities can say that? How many municipalities can say that? None. They're all talking about tax increases, but the government talks about decreasing taxes. The municipalities have to raise taxes. It's still the same pocket. It's still the same taxpayer.

What's missing in the whole budgeting process is certainly a regard for education. That's one thing I would have supported had there been sufficient money in here to help the school boards. How many of them are running a deficit now?

DR. MASSEY: About 26.

MRS. SOETAERT: About 26 of them, 30 percent. A good 30 percent of them are running deficits, yet that was never accounted for, never planned in the original budget, not even in the backwards budget. It's not even put in now. So it's disappointing not to see that in Bill 49.

MR. MacDONALD: And the health hazards from pine shakes.

MRS. SOETAERT: You're kidding. You're talking about health hazards from pine shakes?

MR. MacDONALD: From untreated pine shakes.

MRS. SOETAERT: From untreated pine shakes. People who are allergic to mold. That wasn't even mentioned in the Ministry of Health.

We should forewarn you. Actually we're going to help you in your budget planning for next year. We're going to warn you that pine shakes are going to be a big issue. You should plan dollars for that -- right? -- so that next fall we don't have to verbally attack the issue of pine shakes with this government, people suffering from asthma, moldy roofs, schools with moldy roofs that have children who have allergies. In St. Albert. Yup. So we're going to help with the budgeting process. A lot for that one next year. The government will probably be sued, and they'll have to plan for that.

In transportation may I recommend a few extra dollars? I was talking about the municipal infrastructure.

5:10

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader rising on a point of order.

Point of Order

Questioning a Member

MRS. NELSON: Well, I think it's *Beauchesne* 482. I was wondering if the hon. member would share some of the wisdom that she's gained from being in here by supplying us, as we're doing the budgeting process starting now, with the opposition's forecast for the price of oil, the price of gas, pulp and paper prices, if they would give us a recommendation on corporate taxes and send that over. Would you entertain that question and give us those results, please?

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister's rising with the object of asking a question, but the normal practice is to allow the member to say yes or no, and she hadn't said either of those. So the hon. minister will ask the hon. member whether she will entertain a question, and if she does not, there's no argument. She just proceeds forward.

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry if I overstepped my bounds, but I wanted to be sure that I gave the hon. member the opportunity to say yes or no.

THE CHAIRMAN: That's what I'm attempting to do.

MRS. NELSON: I wouldn't want to overstep my bounds, and hopefully she'll respond with some answers.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert on the question. Yes or no?

MRS. SOETAERT: No. However, I did hear it, and if the minister would be willing to provide us with as much support staff as she gets and enough research dollars, you're darn right.

DR. TAYLOR: Come over, Colleen.

MRS. SOETAERT: Blah. No offence. He said, "Come over." I said, "Blah."

THE CHAIRMAN: Deputy Government House Leader, we have just finished the point of order.

MRS. NELSON: I've another one.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Just a word of caution. When we have a number of repeated points of order, there comes the question as to whether or not this is a true point of order or whether it's harassment, so the chair will listen with interest. Ah, it's waived.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, on the estimates.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Yes. Thank you. In fact, actually I have an amendment that I'd like to present, Mr. Chairman, because of my belief in the fact that the public deserves to know how this process works, and I don't think they do. So I will make this amendment right now. I'll send the original signed copy to you. Shall I have two minutes for everybody to get it? Do you want me to wait a second, or shall I keep going? I'll wait a second.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, I'm making this on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, and this is how it's amended. The following is added after section 3: "This Act comes into force on Proclamation." That's not difficult to accept. And here it is, here's the clincher that I think some people might be afraid of, but I can always hope that they'll accept this amendment. "This Act shall not be proclaimed until 1 day of public hearings have been held in each of Alberta's cities with a population in excess of 30,000 persons." Now, it isn't that many cities, but it's a few, and the point of this amendment is that people will know the process.

Now, I realize the Minister of Economic Development is wrinkling it up and throwing it away, and that kind of hurts my sensibilities, Mr. Chairman, but I'm tough. I'm tough; I can take it. How many cities would this be? Really, how many cities would this be? Not that many, but you know, what it would do is it would educate people in the budget process, which is terribly flawed and terribly shoddy.

I'm going to speak to the amendment first. Yes? Oh, I'm sorry.

Chairman's Ruling Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: The chair is most anxious to hear the comments of the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert but has difficulty because we have quite a number of people who are carrying on lively conversations. Before naming any of these people who are carrying on their lively conversations, we'd invite them to go outside the Chamber.

Hon. members. Some of the hon. members are carrying on such a lively conversation that they don't even hear the chair. I wonder if the hon. members who wish to carry on lively conversations would please go outside and do so.

The hon. member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I can't believe that people aren't just listening with bated breath, but that's the reality of the Legislature in Committee of the Whole, I'm sure.

The point to this amendment is truly public awareness. You know what? It would be an opportunity for the government to say: "This is how the process works. This is why we have supplementary estimates." I mean, you don't read anywhere in the paper where . . .

Point of Order
Admissibility of Amendments

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Provincial Treasurer is rising on a point of order.

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Chairman, I realize it's been busy and you don't have the time necessary to consider the form and intent of the amendments. It's not always available to you, but I would like to suggest that the amendment itself is out of order. I'm referring to *Beauchesne* 579, which is very clear that "an amendment setting forth a proposition dealing with a matter which is foreign to the proposition involved in the main motion is not relevant and cannot be moved."

What we're talking about here in the amendment is public hearings, and that has absolutely nothing to do with an appropriation bill. Zero, nothing. Appropriations are quite rightly the matter of discussion here in the Assembly. So I would suggest that under 579 it is totally out of order and is part of their filibuster on this particular appropriation bill.

THE CHAIRMAN: On the point of order? Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Chairman, on the point of order. There really is no point of order here. Just because this government does not want to be subject to the scrutiny of people in this province when they bring in not one, not two . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: On the point of order, please.

MS CARLSON: That is. There is no point of order on it, Mr. Chairman. There is nothing out of order in bringing an appropriation bill to the people.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, if there's an objection to the form of the amendment, as the Provincial Treasurer has suggested, that would be, then, the argument that the people who oppose the point of order would follow. However, we do have a tradition of accepting the Parliamentary Counsel's legal advice. I'm remiss if I've not indicated to the committee that this amendment A1 does have the requisite recognition by Parliamentary Counsel that it's in order. So in that respect, unless we have a battery of lawyers who care to argue the contrary, I think we'll proceed on the basis that it is in order.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, thank you. It's been such a good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, and of course I respect the work of Parliamentary Counsel, so it's not a point of order, right?

5:20

THE CHAIRMAN: No. It's found to be in order, but there's another point of order being raised by the hon. Provincial Treasurer.

Point of Order
Explanation of Chairman's Ruling

MR. DAY: Well, I appreciate the esteemed view of Parliamentary Counsel, and I also recognize the pressure people are under to deliberate over certain amendments, but I would respectfully request, as is permitted in Standing Orders, to ask for a reason for that. I do appreciate, again, the esteemed wisdom and the work done by Parliamentary Counsel, but I will use Standing Orders to request an explanation as to how it could possibly be in order when in fact it is foreign to the proposition involved. And I would

now add to 579(1) section 579(2), which says, "An amendment may not raise a new question which can only be considered as a distinct motion after proper notice." So this is a new question that is being raised.

I do agree with the chair when he said to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie that she was not addressing the point of order when she talked about trying to do things away from the eye of the public. We are here in the Legislature before the public, forever recorded in *Hansard* as required by law, to bring these items to public discussion. That's what we're doing. My first point of order, which was 579(1), which you said was out of order, I'd ask for an explanation of and would also suggest and now add to it 579(2), which says that a new question is being raised. You're now talking about public meetings. That's a new issue, going around the province. That's a new issue, totally foreign to an appropriation bill.

THE CHAIRMAN: What the hon. Provincial Treasurer is really asking the chair is for the reasons for the ruling, not to enter into the debate of what he's talking about. If he would refer to 698 in *Beauchesne*, he might find further reasons for it. The reason offered by the chair at the time was that the Parliamentary Counsel, legal counsel, has ruled that this is in order, and it has been the tradition of chairs and Speakers to accept that when dealing with amendments. That would be the reason for the ruling.

Having said that, we now invite the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to continue and hopefully conclude her remarks within the time allowed her.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: I know, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate that. I also know that the Premier today said we were just letting this Assembly leave way too quickly and we weren't discussing the bills enough. So I want to make sure that my constituents know that I am concerned about appropriations, how the budget is done, and that's why I'm here. I know that the deputy House leader will report that back, and I'd love to speak to the appropriation.

MR. DAY: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Provincial Treasurer is rising yet again on a point of order. I've already indicated to the hon. Deputy Government House Leader that repeated points of order while a member is trying to speak can border on something called harassment. But if you have a point of order, please state it, and let's get on with it.

Point of Order
Admissibility of Amendments

MR. DAY: Well, Mr. Chairman, these are separate and distinct citations, each and every one, and 698(7), which you referred to, says, "An amendment is out of order if it imposes a charge upon the Public Treasury." These public meetings, unless the Liberals are volunteering to do them and all the advertising for free, are imposing a charge upon the public Treasury. Citation 698(7) would also suggest it is out of order. It's a totally different citation, with respect.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Provincial Treasurer continues to debate the merits of his original point of order. The point of order that was entertained by the chair was: what was the basis for the ruling by the chair? The chair gave the basis for the ruling, the tradition of accepting . . .

Now, the chair does not have at the moment the legal qualifications, experience, and background to be able to debate with that, so right now the chair has given the Treasurer the reasons for the ruling and advised to look elsewhere as well. But the reason for the chair's ruling was given, and we'll continue with the debate on amendment A1.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: On the amendment. Actually, Mr. Chairman, I want to speak specifically to point (2). Do you know that in Spruce Grove I could get a gym for nothing? The hon. Treasurer could come out and explain how supplementary estimates work, how the budget works. [interjections] I may want to speak for a minute or two. I know that members across the way could do the same thing in their communities since I'm sure they're all good community members. They can get a facility, a gymnasium or something, which would give you a free opportunity to . . .

MR. BONNER: Even in Lac Ste. Anne.

MRS. SOETAERT: Even in Lac Ste. Anne. I know Lac Ste. Anne could find . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Metropolitan areas.

MRS. SOETAERT: Oh, right. We need metropolitan areas. I'm sure Edmonton-Ellerslie could . . .

Chairman's Ruling Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the chair has done all that he can to get the opportunity for you to speak, and you honour this by engaging everybody else in conversation. This is not a conversation; it's presumably a debate on the estimates in Bill 49 and the amendment that you yourself have just moved on behalf of your colleague from Edmonton-Glenora.

So if we could get to the amendment, hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, that would be helpful.

Debate Continued

MRS. SOETAERT: Okay. Point (2), "public hearings," places with 30,000 people. I think they have a right to know about these

supplementary estimates and the hodgepodge system of budgeting that this government continues to do and how they repeat that they're giving money to different areas, when really they've only given it once but they announce it two or three or four times.

I think it'd be an interesting bit of information to take to the bigger cities and just say: "You know what? This minister lobbied harder, so he got money," or "This minister felt public pressure, so he or she got money." Because I know, for example, in municipal infrastructure dollars certainly public pressure changed that one.

I know the municipalities are talking about raising taxes, that they're scrambling to meet their budgets. As the Treasurer always says: there's only one taxpayer, only one pocket. So as we decrease taxes from the provincial level, we increase them two or three times over on the municipal, and I think that is a poor way of doing this, as to who feels the pressure more, who comes into cabinet and says, "Whoa; I got 50 calls from the municipalities, and if we don't provide them with some infrastructure dollars, we're going to really feel the political heat of that."

Well, that is not good planning. That doesn't show any sense of values. Who has to lobby the Minister of Education to do his job lobbying? Who should come to him and say, "You're not lobbying enough for education"? How many people does it take? How many school boards running a deficit? How many superintendents to do a public statement saying that they just can't do it anymore? How many parents to say: "I have fund-raised till I can't fund-raise anymore. I've sold calendars and chocolates and gift wrap, and I've worked bingos and Christmas labels and you name it." How come they aren't heard by the Minister of Education? How many kids have to be crowded in a classroom before he properly lobbies so that he can go through the Treasury to the lottery dollars? Which is not a slush fund; it just seems that way, but it's not, I'm sure.

I'd love to see supplementary estimates on the Minister of Education's behalf. I really would. I'd stand in here and support him on it so that children around this province aren't in classrooms of 38, 39, 40 kids in a class. That's ridiculous. That's not showing any value or planning or budgeting for education. Totally out of the supplementary estimates. Totally out of the original budget. Totally disappointing.

[The committee adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

